

SASKATOON
PATROL

WALLACE Q.
REID

WILD
WEST
CLUB

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PATROL

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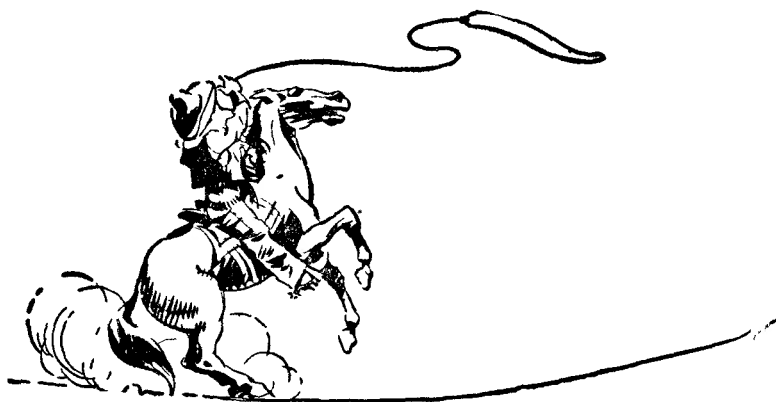
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SASKATOON PATROL

(*A Wild West Novel*)

Adventures in the West!

IN *Saskatoon Patrol* are related the stirring and exciting adventures of a typical patrol of the North-West Mounties, that magnificent body of men to whom is entrusted the policing of the great Dominion. Mr. Wallace Q. Reid writes of the days when lawlessness was part and parcel of the life of the sparsely populated provinces, and his portrayal of the many reckless characters who came in conflict with the Mounties makes enthralling reading.



SASKATOON PATROL

WALLACE Q. REID



WILD WEST CLUB

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SASKATOON PATROL

TOWARDS the end of a bitter December day a posse of horsemen rode along the lonely Saskatoon trail in the direction of Regina. It had been snowing gently since daybreak, but an hour before the wind had gathered force in the far-away mountains, and now a small blizzard was blowing.

They were a portion of the troop of the North-West Mounted Police, who patrolled the district between Saskatoon and Regina, and were now looking forward to entering barracks and sleeping for the first time for months on a soft bed. All of them were magnificent specimens of manhood and rode their tired mounts as men do who live half their lives in the saddle. But two of them at least were worthy of a fuller description.

One of these two towered above all his comrades—a long, lean figure, with a hatchet face and legs that seemed prodigious. His eyes were set rather close to his thin nose, and his cheek bones protruded slightly, giving him the appearance of an Indian. As a matter of fact, there was not a little Blackfeet blood in Bull Hick's body. Bull had been in the force for eight years, and was reckoned as hard a specimen as one could find.

But this was scarcely true, for the man who rode beside him was harder still. He was not more than thirty, shorter than Bull, but broader in the shoulder, and was known to his comrades as "Silent Alec." His real name, however, was Alexander Mack, and he boasted the rank of sergeant, which, as Bull asserted, was "neither here nor there."

Mack was probably the worst-feared man in the North-West. His career had been one long succession of triumphs, from the time when he had caught red-handed the murderous "Rookie Fin" to the memorable occasion when, by wits and brain power, he had nipped an Indian revolt in the bud.

Yet Mack was the most modest man alive. It was difficult for any one to get him to talk about his work. It was rumoured that the force had saved him from himself, and that in consequence his whole life was devoted to it.

In many things Bull was his superior—riding and following hard trails—but Bull lacked Mack's driving power, his absolutely indefatigable body, and his mental agility. Bull knew this quite well, and was the first to admit it.

"Mack, you ain't no manner of use on a horse, not as horse-riding is reckoned in Nevada," he drawled. "But I guess you sure hit the bean at other things."

In many ways the two tried comrades were opposites. Bull was the born optimist, even when there were no grounds for optimism. Mack, on the contrary, was apt to underrate his chances of success. While Bull lost his heart at least once a month to some fair charmer of the plains, Mack seemed almost oblivious to the fact that the opposite sex existed.

The horsemen pulled up in the shelter of a group of firs, and Mack stared through the driving snow. Bull pointed to a faintly-seen bluff in the distance.

"Ain't that Sweetwater?"

"Yes. We'll camp there, Bull. It's hard going for the horses."

He gave a jerk on the reins, and the party moved forward. The snow lay deep and soft, and it was questionable whether the riders should dismount and beat a track with their feet, for the horses were plunging up to their knees every few minutes.

Another mile was made, and then the wind increased to wildest fury. It flung up huge columns of snow from the trail and made progress well-nigh impossible. The last glimmer of light departed, and still the party was four miles from Sweetwater.

"It's no use," said Mack, "we'll have to camp here!"

The men dismounted, and were about to rig up

the tent which the pack-horse carried, when Mack saw a light not far away.

“ Bull ! ”

“ Hello ? ”

“ That must be the farm that was in disrepair when we came up. Some one must have moved in since.”

“ Sure,” agreed Bull. “ Now ain’t that fortunit. See, there may be something hot and healthy there. Do we make it ? ”

Mack decided on doing so, and the party moved off the main trail and made for the faint light. They reached it ten minutes later. Mack remembered seeing the place a few months back. Then it had been untenanted and in shocking repair. Now it seemed to have had a tremendous amount of work spent on it.

It was a large timber shanty on two floors, with numerous outbuildings in the rear. In many ways it resembled a Swiss chalet, for the original builder had gone in for verandas and ornamentation above the substantial logs which formed the foundation.

Mack walked up the steps to the front door and knocked loudly. A few seconds passed, and an aged woman came. She stared at his uniform with eyes that seemed nervous and frightened.

“ Good-evening ! ” said Mack. “ We’re caught in

the blizzard. Can you give us shelter till the morning ? ”

“ I’ll—I’ll ask the master,” she quavered.

At that moment a dark-complexioned man appeared behind her and waved her away. He scrutinised Mack from under his projecting eyebrows, and appeared to be none too pleased.

“ I’m Henry Higgins,” he said. “ I suppose you want shelter ? ”

“ If there’s any room going.”

Higgins ran his eye over the waiting troopers.

“ Six men and seven horses ! Rather a large handful. There’s not room in the house, but you’re welcome to the barn behind. You’ll be able to stable your horses there, and there is plenty of straw.”

“ That’ll do splendidly. Sorry to trouble you.”

“ No trouble. I’ll hand you the key if you’ll wait.” He disappeared and closed the door behind him, to Mack’s astonishment.

“ No trouble ! ” sang Bull. “ Not on your life—and no beer also, I guess. Now, ain’t it lucky I didn’t bring my watch.”

Mack smiled at the innuendo. Certainly Higgins was not a prepossessing character, but then very few men would care to have a crowd of men and horses quartered on them without notice !

Higgins ultimately brought the key of the barn and pointed out the place to Mack. He bade them

good-night in a tone of finality, and the troopers accepted the hint that he did not wish to be troubled further.

"Cold reception!" growled a man.

"It'll be better than Sweetwater," put in Mack.

"I suppose he is a stranger to the country and hasn't had time to pick up the customs."

The barn proved to be quite a comfortable, roomy place, accommodating men and horses with space to spare. Used to rough living, the men soon had their mounts bedded and a fire going outside. They sat and beguiled the time away in yarns and jokes.

"A weird kind o' shanty this," said Bull. "The old lady who answered the door looked as if she had seen a ghost."

"Maybe Mister Higgins was the ghost," laughed a comrade. "I'll bet he owes her three months' back pay."

Mack listened to the idle talk with interest, sucking complacently at a well-burned pipe. He had summed up Higgins immediately as a boor, or something worse, and was not inclined to discuss him. But all the time he had a feeling that he had seen Higgins' dark face before. Strive as he might, he could not discover under what circumstances.

One by one the men retired to their straw beds, until at last only Mack was left by the smouldering fire. He noticed that it was still snowing hard, but

since the wind had veered round a little estimated that morning would bring a clear sky.

He knocked out his pipe on his boot and, shutting the door, wandered to the corner, where he had spread his blankets. Bull, who was some six feet away, was already fast asleep and doubtless dreaming of the Christmas pudding, which, he asserted, a friend in Nevada had promised to send to barracks in time for Christmas.

Mack slipped off his coat, tunic and boots and composed himself for sleep. He was on the brink of oblivion when a cry came from without—a cry strangely like that of a woman. He raised himself into a sitting position and listened intently. Again it came, from the direction of the house. It rose into a kind of despairing shriek and then died down, to be followed by a low sobbing.

Mack uttered a little hiss and immediately put on his coat and boots. Arming himself with his revolver, he went towards the door and looked out. The fire had been beaten out by the falling snow and intense darkness enveloped everything. Hesitating for a moment, he moved in the direction of the house.

He missed the front entrance, but found himself near a shuttered window, through which came a narrow shaft of light. He put his eye to the slit and found himself gazing on a strange sight.

The room into which Mack gazed was a large one—a kind of bed-sitting room. In the far corner was a bed, on which was stretched a middle-aged man with iron-grey hair. A few feet from the bed was Skinner, standing in a threatening attitude before a beautiful girl of about twenty, whose pale face and twitching hands clearly evidenced her terror.

Mack saw that her eyes were still wet, and deduced that the cry of alarm had come from her. Standing at the table in the centre of the room were two other men of rough type. Their eyes were fixed on Higgins.

Higgins advanced a step nearer the girl and said something in a low voice. She shook her head, and Mack heard the words "No, no." Higgins showed his teeth and exposed a glittering object, which was in his right hand.

The girl put her hands to her cheeks in terror, and the man on the bed roused himself with an effort and brandished his fist. Mack strove to get a full sight of the queer instrument which Higgins held, but failed to do so.

Again Higgins muttered something, and again the girl shook her head—this time less emphatically. Higgins shrugged his shoulders and moved towards the bed. Mack, thinking it high time to interfere, raised his revolver and brought the muzzle in line with the crack. He was about to put a bullet

within a few inches of Higgins' head when the situation took a turn.

The girl ran forward and caught Higgins by the arm. He turned and smiled as she opened her mouth and began to speak rapidly. Mack heard a few words, "gulch" and "third fir," but he failed to make any sense of what she was saying. The two men at the table looked at each other and seemed much relieved, and Higgins patted his informant on the shoulder, much to her resentment. Then the three men left the room, and the girl took a chair and sat by the bed with the sick man.

Mack put the revolver away and bit his lips in perplexity. That some villainy was afoot he had no doubt, but to interfere now seemed undesirable. He decided to wait until morning, and then hunt up the beautiful and distressed girl.

The incident got on his nerves, and he slept but little. At six o'clock he had his men up, and after a quick meal, took Bull into his confidence. Bull opened his eyes wide when he heard the details, but he was led away by his usual optimism.

"Maybe she's Higgins' daughter," he drawled. "If she's like her pop, she won't welcome us bunching in."

But the girl was not in the least like her pop, and Mack was not the kind of man to let things slide in that fashion.

"What you lack is imagination, Bull," he retorted. "Get the boys to saddle. I'm going to interview friend Higgins."

Bull nodded, and Mack made his way across to the house. The snow had ceased to fall, and a wonderful dawn was coming up. Early as it was the old woman was on duty, and with her previous scared look asked him inside. He waited in the hall while she found her lord and master. Higgins nodded as he beheld Mack.

"Morning!" he greeted. "Sleep well?"

"Not very," replied Mack.

Higgins raised his eyebrows.

"I'm sorry to hear that."

"So am I," snapped Mack. "There's a young lady in the house I'd like a word with."

Higgins started, and then assumed a look of blank astonishment.

"You're quite mistaken. I am the only person here, except for the housekeeper, whom you saw just now."

"I had an idea there were at least four men in the house," said Mack; "not to mention the young lady."

Higgins coughed in sinister fashion, but he stopped suddenly as Mack waved a revolver under his nose.

"You're the biggest liar that ever lived, Mister

Higgins. I'm sorry to have to tell you that, but it's true. Find that girl right now, or——"

"Steady!" growled Higgins coolly. "If you are a sergeant of the police, you've no right to start that kind of talk."

"I'll start something else pretty soon," said Mack. "Lead on—and take me all over this place. I've a desire to speak to the girl."

"I tell you——"

He spread out his hands and commenced to show Mack over the building. To Mack's amazement, the result confirmed Higgins' statement. There were certain rooms which looked as if they had been recently occupied, but besides Higgins and the elderly scared woman not another soul could be found! When Mack finally entered the large room into which he had peered on the previous night there was no sign of the bed or its occupant. The whole business was amazing. Higgins was smiling in a satisfied manner.

"Anything else I can show you, sergeant?" he sneered.

"No," snapped Mack, and walked past him into the yard, where the men were mounted and waiting.

"Well?" whispered Bull.

"They've gone—all except Higgins. Bull, there's been some dirty work——"

"I've found something interesting," whispered

Bull. "A new trail—horses—leading from the other shed at the back. If the girl has gone, she's sure on that trail."

"Good. We'll make straight for Regina now."

"But——"

"Regina!" bawled Mack.

The cavalcade started with Higgins waving his hand mockingly from the veranda. Bull, who was riding beside Mack, kept staring at the latter's face, but Mack's expression was sphinx-like. It was only when they were a mile from the farm and in a small pine wood that Mack halted the men.

"Gregory," he said. "Ride right on to Regina. I'll overhaul you later. Bull, I want you to stay behind."

"Sure!" exclaimed Bull delightedly.

The remaining men blew kisses at their comrades as they made down the heavy trail.

"So we're going after her?" hissed Bull.

"Of course—but not with Higgins looking on. He might have found some way to give a warning. Now, Bull, can we intersect that trail anywhere?"

"You bet! I got the lie of it all right. It goes down the bank of the creek yonder. We can skirt the bluff and make it there."

"Good!"

A pull on the reins and the two men went forward. Flat as the country was, Bull knew how to take

advantage of every small undulation and line of trees in order to conceal their intention from Higgins. Half an hour later Bull pointed to some tracks that were partly obscured by snow which had fallen since they were made.

"It's plain sailing now, but they've got a good start."

For three hours the horses ploughed through the deep snow, the two riders maintaining an almost unbroken silence all the way. Then Mack saw in the distance a change in the configuration of the land. The plain heaved up into a plateau, through which was a narrow passage.

"I heard the word 'gulch'—this is the only gulch for miles," exclaimed Mack.

"Sure, and there's something out yonder. Gee, it's a woman!" Mack shaded his eyes from the brilliant sun, and saw a feminine form emerging from the gulch, walking with difficulty through the snow.

"It's the girl," he muttered, and urged his mount forward. A quarter of an hour brought him to the solitary figure. It was indeed the girl he had seen the night before in the farm-house. The large, soft eyes surveyed him in joyful astonishment.

"A policeman!"

"Yes, Sergeant Mack, at your service."

A look of admiration filled the pool-like eyes, and

Mack, who was much more impressionable than folks believed him to be, coughed and looked the other way.

"So you are Sergeant Mack—the real Mack of the North-West Police!"

"Sure," replied Bull. "Take a good look at him, for he usually charges a dollar——"

Mack silenced him with a thump in the back, and bending down lifted the girl bodily on to his horse.

"What is wrong?" he queried. "Why did those fellows bring you here and leave you to walk twelve miles on foot?"

"Robbery."

"Ah! What have they stolen?"

"Gold. It was hidden along the gulch—by the third pine. They forced me to conduct them here—oh, it's too long a story to tell now. They've got it and have gone—there," she pointed to the west, and Mack nodded swiftly. "And the men at the farm—Higgins——?" She clenched her small fist and looked fierce.

"He isn't Higgins," she retorted. "My name is Higgins—Elinor Higgins—and my father is sick. That scoundrel is an outlaw named Corri——"

Mack started and hit the saddle with his hand as he heard the name. Now he knew where he had seen the dark, sinister face before. Corri was wanted on a dozen charges, and had always managed to evade

the law. Mack had once seen him for ten seconds in a fierce affray at Edmonton.

"Bull," he hissed. "I must leave Corri to you. Take this young lady back and get Corri if you can—dead or alive. I'm going after the other two."

"But they are armed," put in Elinor.

"So am I. Get on to the other horse, please!"

Bull came alongside, and Elinor changed seats, to Bull's great delight.

"It's hard going for old Ginger—the horse," he drawled. "'But I've a hunch we'll get there in quick time. As for Mister Corri—well——!"

He turned his head to say good-bye to Mack, but that worthy was already a hundred yards away making for the trail of the vanished men.

"Jest like Alec," mused Bull; "when that fellow wants a thing he wants it badly."

"But they are two to one," said Elinor.

"Sure, but Alec's allus worth two men—sometimes more. Are you quite comfy?"

"Yes, thank you."

Bull made a noise with his lips, and his big horse went forward with its double burden.

Bull's ride back was an extremely pleasant affair, for Bull had a quick appreciation for feminine beauty, and to be within a few inches of a girl of Elinor's charm was to him something very

little less than paradise. It was only when they were within half a mile of the farm that he remembered there was serious work on hand. At once he banished his dreams and got to business.

"I've gotta get that fellow, or Alec'll sure wring the changes on me. Will you stay here with the horse while I go forward?"

"Can't I come, too?" she pleaded. "My father is there, and may need me."

"But he ain't there," argued Bull.

"Yes, yes."

"But Alec said——"

"He was mistaken. My father is in that house. We can hitch the horse to this tree and go forward without being seen. But in any case Corri will have gone. He only stayed to prevent my father from spreading an alarm."

"Well, if he's gone, I'll darn soon find him," muttered Bull. "We may as well ride there in that case." They reached the farm, and the old woman saw them from the window and ran to the door, almost falling on Elinor's neck as she beheld her.

"Oh, Miss Elinor, he's gone at last. What a dreadful man! He—he threatened to shoot me if I——"

"Yes, yes," interrupted Elinor, "but—my father?"

"He is better now. I—I thought he had been

murdered. That ruffian drugged him or something just after you left, and pushed the bed through the sliding door into the old chamber beyond. He saw the sergeant coming across, and threatened to shoot me dead if I said a word. I——”

Elinor touched her gently on the shoulder and went into the house, beckoning Bull to follow. Off the hall in the large room was the grey-haired man reclining in bed. He uttered a cry of joy as Elinor entered, and then stared at Bull.

“The police,” informed Elinor. “They were quartered in the barn last night. The sergeant overheard something, and he and this good man followed our trail.”

“I see—and the gold?”

“Gone.”

“You bet it hasn’t gone for long,” put in Bull; “you’ll find that sergeant of ours back here with it before long. Now I guess I’ll get a lead on Mister Corri. S’cuse me!”

With which he left the room and went nosing round the house. There were lots of tracks, but only one which would meet the case, and Bull found it at last. He leapt on his horse and stroked its nose affectionately.

“Ginger, laddie, I guess you’re almost used up, but we’ll jest git this hornet, and then for Regina and real oats.”

But Bull's errand was fruitless. He came back late that night with an expression that would have melted the heart of a snake.

"I lost him—lost him!" he hissed. "If he ain't a spectre, he's the nearest thing to it I've ever seen. How can I look Mack in the face? Oh, hell!"

"I'm nervous about your comrade," whispered Elinor. "Those men are desperate. Corri may have joined them before Mack overtook them. Oh, why doesn't he come?"

Bull, too, was a little nervous, and sat before the fire moving his long legs restlessly.

"I'll have to go after him soon," he muttered. "Gee, if anything happens to him——!"

Half an hour passed, and then Bull's keen ears heard the whinny of a horse outside. He shot out of his chair and went to the window. It was moonlight, and the sight he saw brought a loud "horoo" from his lips. He turned to Elinor and danced a few wild steps.

"He's got 'em. Two of 'em roped up like trussed hens. Here, I'm off!"

He disappeared to lend Mack a hand, and some time later the pair entered the house, Mack with a handkerchief tied round his left wrist. Elinor went to him and caught his right hand.

"Thank God you are back!"

"Thanks," he replied. "They led me a long trip, and the gold-dust was heavy. There's a deuce of a lot of it. I'll bring it in presently."

"So you got that, too?"

"Of course."

"Oh, come and see my father. I've told him about you. We were so worried."

Higgins, who had got out of bed and donned a dressing-gown, shook hands warmly, and smiled his thanks as he heard the news.

"I am not so keen about the gold," he confessed. "But I hated to be coerced. Elinor here gave it away."

"How could I do otherwise?" replied the girl with a shudder. "The man was a fiend incarnate. He threatened my father with the most dreadful thing."

"The thing he held in his hand?" said Mack.

"You saw it?"

"Yes, through a crack in the shutter. What was it?"

"A germ culture—smallpox."

Mack's eyes flashed, but the next moment he shook his head.

"A ruse—he could not possibly get hold of such a thing."

"He said it was. I dared not take the risk. I saw the syringe with something in it. Ugh!"

"But how did the gold-dust come to be buried out there?" asked Mack.

"A week ago an Indian made this place. He collapsed by the very door, and we discovered that he was mortally wounded. We did the best we could for him, but he died two days later. Before he died he told us his story. He and his brother had found gold farther north, and had worked at it all the summer. They were returning to Regina with the product of their labour, when they fell in with Corri and his friends."

"And Corri coveted the gold?"

"Yes. There was a fight, and the Indian's brother was shot dead. The survivor escaped with the gold, but the heavy load made progress slow, and when Corri loomed in sight he hid it along the gulch."

"And when did Corri turn up here?"

"Soon after the death of the Indian. He divined that the dead man had told us his secret, and threatened us with all kinds of punishment unless we told him where the gold was. Isolated as we were, there was no chance of getting help. For two days we defied him, and then he went away and came back with that horrible instrument." Elinor shuddered, and her father caught her hand fondly. She smiled again and looked at Mack with eyes of admiration and gratitude. "Thank God you happened to come here. The pity is that the chief villain escaped."

It raised the question which Bull had been fearing. It surprised him that Mack had not referred to it before.

"I guess the snow helped him," he growled. "But I'll get him one day."

Mack shrugged his shoulders, and after partaking of some refreshments, the pair turned in for the night. They brought the gold into the house next morning, and with their two miserable prisoners trailing behind bade farewell to Higgins and his pretty daughter.

"Gee, she was peaches!" sighed Bull.

"Was she?" replied Mack disinterestedly.

"You bet. I guess it would take an archangel to attract your gaze, Mack."

"Perhaps. But when one's gaze is occupied with a pretty girl it misses other things—Corri, for instance."

"Oh, him!" snapped Bull, "I'll get him before I've finished."

"No, you won't, Bull."

"Why not?"

"I got him out yonder. He came to join his confederates, and I dropped him over a ravine. There wasn't time to get his body—but it doesn't matter."

Bull stared, and then whistled.

"Well, I'm——; that's what I call a straight flush!"

"It was just good luck. Bull, if the weather holds, we ought to make Regina to-night."

"We ought," agreed Bull, with a sidelong glance. "What did she say her name was?"

"Queen Elizabeth," snorted Mack. "Bull, pull yourself together, for the love of Mike. And watch that fellow behind you."

Bull glared round, hitched up his belt and, throwing dreams to the winds, became a policeman once more. He envied Mack his apparent total unconcern. But then, Mack was Mack, and that is saying a lot!

TROUBLE AT BEAVER LAKE

THE Commissioner of Police at Regina sat tapping a long blue document with an ivory paper-knife, knitting his brows as he perused it for the fifth time. A young officer seated on the other side of the table waited patiently for his chief's comments.

"Beaver Lake again!" sighed the Commissioner. "This is the third murder in two years. Something will have to be done."

"Aren't Saskatoon doing anything?"

"They've no men to spare. Rawlings was obliged to send a party up to Fort Albert. No, we must deal with it from this end. What men are available?"

"There is Sparks, and Gregory, and Dunn, and——"

The officer rattled off a dozen names, but the Commissioner shook his head.

"The case calls for considerable intelligence. Sparks is a good man, but not the right one."

"There is Mack, but he has only just——"

"Mack! I forgot he was in barracks. Of course Mack is the very man. Most fortunate!"

"Mack is pretty well dead beat. He had a thin time on that last affair. Any one but Mack would have been dead by now."

"I know, but the business is urgent and important. I am afraid Mack will have to forgo his rest."

He rang for an orderly and ordered him to tell Sergeant Mack to report himself immediately. Ten minutes passed, and then Mack was announced and entered the room. The Commissioner smiled as he gazed on the broad imposing figure. He knew Mack had been dragged out of a sleep of exhaustion, and it surprised him that he could dress and look so fit and ready in the short space of a few minutes.

"Sergeant Mack, I am afraid I must send you out again."

"Very good, sir."

"You know Beaver Lake?"

"Quite well, sir," replied Mack grimly.

"Yes, I suppose you do. Five days ago a young French Canadian named Lepine was murdered in the saloon—stabbed in the breast. What clues there are you will find in this document. I will have a copy made at once. I want you to leave for Beaver Lake with the least possible delay. You may take—how many men can you spare, Winton?"

"Four."

"They would be in the way, sir," put in Mack.
"One man will be quite sufficient."

"Very well, but Beaver Lake is an unruly place."

Mack, who had all but lost his life there two years

back, needed no reminder on that point. A lumber camp had been started on the western shore of the lake, and the lumberjacks were of the fiercest type, and mixed with the genuine lumbermen were not a few "sharps" and murderous characters.

"Who will you take with you?" queried Winton.

"Hicks, if I may."

"Good. Will you warn Hicks? Draw what rations you require. Will you take mounts?"

"Too much snow. A dog-team would be quicker and surer."

"Very well. The copy of this report from Saskatoon will be ready in an hour."

Mack left the office and rounded up Bull Hicks, who was playing a furious game of poker with four of his comrades. When Bull heard the news he nearly fainted, for he had planned to have the merriest Christmas on record.

"Beaver Lake!" he ejaculated. "Wall, I ask you, boys, is that the kinder spot in which to sing 'Good Christian Men, Rejoice'? I tell you a man's life in this corps ain't worth two cents."

"Hustle!" said Mack. "We're hitting the trail in an hour."

And in an hour to the minute Mack and Bull Hicks were waving their hands to a crowd of men outside the huts and making for the snowed-up trail that led to Beaver Lake.

"Who's gone and done something?" queried Bull.

"That's exactly what we are going to find out. A Frenchman was knifed last week in the saloon by the camp. There's a long report from Saskatoon, but I haven't read it yet. There'll be plenty of time to do so before we hit Beaver Lake."

Mack was right, for a terrific blizzard kept them confined to their tent next day. While Bull swore loud and long, Mack made himself acquainted with the facts concerning the killing. But beyond giving the time of the murder, and a description of several men believed to have been in the saloon when the lights were smashed and Lepine stabbed, there was little to make a man optimistic.

Bull digested the report during the next few days, and vented the opinion that he and Mack had started many days too late. Mack expressed no opinion whatever, but when he and Bull arrived within a few miles of the camp, he halted the dog team, and rigged up the tent.

"It's early yet," remarked Bull. "Ain't we going right into the place?"

"Not as we are. You are going to be the only policeman on this trail. I am going as a lumberjack in search of work."

While Bull watched, he dragged a bundle from the sled, and going into the tent, rapidly transformed

himself into a typical wanderer of the North. Bull now knew why Mack had not troubled to shave for five days in succession. He wore a scrubby beard, and in his rough garb looked utterly different.

"Gee, is it really you?" gasped Bull.

"Yes. I'm going to wander into camp like this. I'll need snowshoes and a pack. You stick to all the other gear. To-morrow you can bunch in and raise inquiries, if you like, but don't start anything rough."

"I get you," growled Bull.

Half an hour later Mack wandered through the trees towards the scattered township by the frozen lake. Lights began to appear as he reached the beaten track in the snow, which served as the main street. At the far end of it was a fair-sized saloon, from which issued considerable noise. He made for the door and entered the place.

Early as it was, the main room was packed with men, playing poker and sundry other gambling games. The counter ran the whole length of the room, and ended at a flight of stairs. To the right of the stairs was a door, which he concluded led to the inner room, where the murder had taken place.

He nodded casually as he kicked off the snowshoes and unfastened his pack. The occupants stared at him in disinterested fashion, and went on with their gambling and conversation. Then, reaching the

counter, he called for a drink, and asked about a room.

He was fortunate enough to get a small attic on the top floor. After taking his belongings there, he came downstairs and began to examine the habitues of the place at leisure. They were a mixed crowd and as rough as their wild life could make them. While he watched two fights took place, and blood flowed, but peace was restored in remarkably quick time.

It was later in the evening that his interest received a fillip. Two men entered the saloon, accompanied by a woman. The former were not of the prevailing type. They were better dressed, and lacked the look of toil which so clearly marked the bodies of the lumberjacks. The taller of the two was named Rob Tighe, and his companion Albert Heath. The woman was middle-aged, and looked weary and sick. Tighe referred to her as Rose, but whether she was his wife or not Mack could not discover.

While the two men joined in a game of cards, Rose sat before a glass of refreshment and watched with uninterested eyes. Mack continued to smoke and chat with the bar-tender, but all his attention was taken up by the new arrivals, for Tighe and Heath were mentioned in the report as suspects, and there was also a woman in the case.

But another actor came on the stage half an hour later. Immediately she entered the room Tighe threw in his "hand" and went to greet her. She was not more than twenty—a slight, but impressive dark figure, with dancing eyes and gleaming teeth.

"Pretty girl!" remarked Mack.

"Yep," agreed the bar-tender. "She's Suzanne, and I guess she's put life into this place. You jest watch her!"

Suzanne was certainly worth watching. In ten minutes she turned the place into a circus. She drank a long drink at a gulp, dragged a man from the corner to play a waltz on the out-of-tune piano, and began to dance with man after man, until it seemed she would drop with exhaustion.

All the time Rose regarded her with eyes of hate. One thing was made abundantly clear before the party broke up. Tighe was madly in love with Suzanne, and every one knew it, including the pale-faced woman called Rose.

A week at Beaver Lake provided Mack with much food for reflection. Believing him to be what he masqueraded as, the citizens soon got on friendly terms, and Mack learned a few things about the locality, but they helped him little towards achieving his real object.

Suzanne amazed him more and more, for she appeared to live a life of complete idleness, not to

say luxury. The intimacy between her and Tighe increased rather than diminished, and, as Bull put it, "the banns were up."

"I'll admit she's got me guessing," mused Bull. "She don't seem Tighe's sort of woman and yet she lets him paw her—pah!"

Mack said nothing, but thought a lot. Once or twice he had conversed with Suzanne, and whenever he mentioned the murder her eyes blazed and her hand trembled. To win her confidence Mack indulged in a wild bout of gambling and drinking but instead of having the effect he expected it brought from Suzanne a protest.

"Why do you not work?" she asked. "Soon you will have no money, and then you will starve."

"Then I'll have to work," replied Mack. "We haven't seen much of the policeman these past few days."

"Oh, him!" she sneered. "He does nothing but sit about and smoke. He will discover nothing here. If they thought he would they would shoot him."

"They?"

She turned her head away and thrust her right hand into her coat pocket. Mack knew that inside it reposed a neat little revolver.

"You mean the fellows who put Lepine away?"

"It may not have been only men," she rejoined.

Then, quickly, "Why do you always talk about that? Come and dance with me."

Bull met her one day near his camp and passed a greeting. She stopped and looked at him, with a rather sarcastic smile.

"Still sitting and watching?"

"Sure! Maybe I'll be here for a couple of years. Anyway, it's a mighty pleasant place to camp in. One of these days I'll find what I want."

She laughed amusedly, and Bull, looking down, saw the protuberance in her pocket.

"A gun!" he drawled. "You're mighty young to carry a gun."

"Not too young to know how to use it," she retorted, and, whipping it from her pocket, crumpled up an enamel mug at twenty yards.

"By gosh, you're right!" exclaimed Bull. "But take care, missie; take care!"

She met his direct gaze, and then laughed and went tripping down the trail. The next time Bull saw her she was with the sinister Tighe, chatting and joking like another person.

"Is she in the swindle?" he inquired of Mack.

"That's the question," replied Mack slowly. "Rose is the person to enlighten us. Get on the friendly side of Rose in quick time. We've got to show some results soon."

So, while Mack frequented the saloon and kept his

eyes and ears open, Bull tried his powers of fascination on the wounded heart of Rose. But Rose was not giving away any information, although Bull flattered her, coaxed her, and threatened her in turn.

"I know nothing about it," she asserted; then, with a flash of her eyes, "Why don't you ask Suzanne?"

"She's innocent, I guess."

"Innocent, is she? You, like all the rest, think that butter won't melt in her mouth. Where does she get her money, eh? That man was murdered for his money. He had a wallet full of it. Did they find any left when they picked him up? Every one is crazy about Suzanne. Ugh, I hate her!"

It gave Bull furiously to think. Certainly Suzanne was a mysterious character, despite her charm and pretty face. Then there was Tighe's companion, Heath. Where did he come in?

While Bull was worrying out the solution, Mack had advanced a long way in his investigations. He happened to see Tighe and Heath in conversation with a half-breed called White George. Tighe appeared to be angry, as also did the half-caste. In the end a wad of notes changed hands, and White George appeared to be placated. Ten minutes later Mack was dealing out instructions to Bull.

"There's a half-caste named White George in

camp. Go and get him at once. Tell him you are arresting him for the murder of Lepine."

"What's that?"

"He didn't do it—but he knows who did."

So the half-caste was duly run to earth, and quaked with fear when he saw Bull's revolver six inches from his head.

"No kill man," he stammered.

"You can tell that to the crows," retorted Bull.

"I reckon you'll hang all right."

"No kill man," pleaded the scared fellow.

"Well, if you don't want to hang, tell me who did it."

"Not know. That night Lepine came with plenty of money and play cards in small room of saloon. He call Heath cheat, and then lights go out. I hear terrible groan, and then I escape through window—every one escape."

"Who were in that room? How many?"

"Me, Heath, Tighe, Lepine, and Rose."

"And you never saw who did it?"

The half-caste shook his head.

"Then why does Tighe give you money, eh?"

"He think I know who did it—but not know."

"What men carried a knife that night?"

"Never see knife, but think Heath have one—long one."

Eventually Bull let him go, satisfied that he was

speaking the truth and, in case of need, could be arrested again. Mack, who had remained within earshot, came forward and nodded with satisfaction.

"It reduces it down to Heath or Tighe. If we don't get nearer than that in the next few days we'll take 'em both and White George as witness."

"And Rose and Suzanne, too?" put in Bull.
"It'll be a merry party."

"They are not necessary. If the two men are convicted one will save his neck by 'splitting' on the other—they are that type."

"True, O Solomon," quoth Bull. "But there is going to be skin and hair flying around before we get them fellows out of Beaver Lake."

"Probably," replied Mack. "I thought you liked that kind of thing."

"Wal, it's a change after sitting about for so long."

That evening Suzanne seemed unduly excited. Mack watched her out of the corner of his eye and wondered mightily. For the past two days he had adopted a gruff attitude towards her. He could not forgive her for the part she was playing. Though Suzanne must have known perfectly well that Rose was in almost every respect Tighe's wife, she had not the slightest regard for the feelings of the abandoned woman, and flirted with Tighe openly. Drink went

round in large quantities, and Tighe became hopelessly intoxicated. Before he retired Mack put in a word of warning to the excited Suzanne.

"Take care! You are treading on thin ice!"

"What do you mean?"

"You are playing the fool."

"It is you who are the fool," she retorted. "You do not understand me. Why should I not dance and sing and be merry? Why—why?"

"Because a man was murdered in this place not many weeks ago and certain persons may find themselves in a tight corner. Take care of Tighe."

She trembled a little, and then laughed almost hysterically.

"Don't do that," he commanded.

"I shall laugh when I like," she retorted. "One never knows when the laugh may change—to tears."

She skipped away and reeled round the room on the arm of the man who had in some queer fashion fascinated her. Mack felt sick at the sight, and resolved to save Suzanne from herself by making an earlier arrest than he had intended. He found Bull before he went to bed and confided his intentions.

"To-morrow?"

"Aye to-morrow morning. You take Heath and I'll attend to Tighe."

Bull nodded and yawned. He was dog-tired and weary of doing nothing. He was the kind of man

who thrived on dangerous situations, and he reckoned there would be lots of excitement in the morning.

But the morrow had unexpected developments in store. Mack came to the camp early and took away his police clothes and a pair of handcuffs.

"I'll change in the saloon," he said, "and get Tighe the moment he steps into camp. The window gives me a good view of the street. Take no chance with the other bird."

"Not much ! I'll bring him right here."

Mack strode off with his bundle, and Bull, after a brief meal, prepared to hunt up his prospective prisoner. He was driving the sled towards the camp when a man came rushing down the street, waving his hands.

"Hold up !" he shouted. "You're wanted yonder. There's a woman nearly corpsed."

"Who and where ?"

"Rose Tighe. I went in to see Tighe and found him gone, and Rose as near dead as makes no difference. She's in that shack yonder. There's a doctor two miles away. I'll get him."

He went on his way, and Bull made for the shack in the distance. He arrived there to hear a faint moaning from within, and, without hesitation, he entered the place. Rose was lying on her bed, with her face convulsed, twisting from side to side in

anguish. On the table was a small bottle half-full of liquid. Bull smelt it, but could not identify the contents.

"Oh, God!" groaned the sufferer.

"What have you done?" queried Bull, leaning over her.

"Pois-on! Nothing to live for now! He's gone—with her!"

"Who's gone?"

The mouth formed Tighe's name, and then the eyes closed and she lay still. For a moment Bull thought the end had come, but the body moved again, and from the lips came talk that was partly incoherent.

"After ten years—left me. I loved him. Curse her—taking him from me. I'll keep silent no longer. Where are you? He's a murderer—he killed Lepine that night with Heath's knife. I stuck by him because——"

Again the lips ceased to function. Bull felt the pulse, but found it still beating. He remembered that Mack was waiting to make his capture, and felt that not a second should be wasted in informing him of what he had learnt. But it seemed inhuman to leave the woman. Then he thought he might try an emetic pending the arrival of the doctor, and looked round for some salt.

It was an hour before the doctor came. Bull's

emetic had had its effect, and the medico pronounced that Rose would live. Bull at once flew to the saloon, but could find no trace of Mack. Then he ran into the half-caste, White George, who informed him that another policeman had gone up the trail northwards an hour before. That this was Mack was obvious, and Bull at once set the dogs heading that way.

Mack in the meantime had got on to Tighe's trail by sheer good luck. The room at the top of the hotel afforded him a view extending some ten miles. He had changed his clothes, and was watching the street, when his glance wandered to the barren snowfield beyond. Far away he saw a dog-sled moving north. Among his possessions was a pair of powerful binoculars. He got them and focused them on the dots in the distance. In that clear atmosphere he could recognise Tighe rushing the dogs, and Suzanne sitting in the sled.

Five minutes later he was downstairs and making up the street in great haste. Once out of the camp he was compelled to put on the snowshoes, which were strapped on his back, but he was an expert in the use of them, and ran with ambling gait into the white wastes.

His quarry had disappeared over a ridge, but he had fixed the direction, and continued to run doggedly. At the summit of the long elevation he saw the dogs again—nearer this time. The hard

going was sapping his stupendous energy, but his mind was full with a single object, and he was oblivious to the fact that his heart was thumping loudly and the perspiration streaming from his face and neck.

It was fortunate that Tighe had taken a lonely trail, for absence of traffic had left the snow loose and bad for the dogs. An hour more and Mack was within half a mile of the sled. It passed into a wood, and he followed it.

A long ascent followed, and he knew that on this the dogs would lose time. He slackened his headlong pace, and was enabled to get his breath back. He calculated that he would need it all, for Tighe was not the man to submit to easy arrest in his elopement. That brought him to reflect upon Suzanne. In the circumstances her conduct was inexcusable. Women were beyond him, he argued. What could a young and pretty girl like Suzanne see in a beetle-browed ruffian like Tighe. He gave it up.

On reaching the brow of the hill he looked down into the open valley beneath, and gasped with amazement at the sight which presented itself to him. The sled was stationary, and a short distance from it stood Suzanne with a revolver in her hand. She was facing Tighe, who was evidently astonished and bewildered. The pair were separated by about twenty yards.

Suzanne raised the revolver, and Tighe put out his hand imploringly. The next instant the round fur cap was whisked from his head by a shot from Suzanne's weapon. It was the signal that she was in deadly earnest, and Tighe, with a curse, drew his own weapon. Before the startled Mack could do anything, Tighe had fired and missed.

Suzanne's revolver came up. Immediately Mack unslung his rifle and dropped on his knee. He aligned the sights on Tighe, but before he could pull the trigger Suzanne's revolver echoed through the valley. Mack saw the big figure drop into the snow, and swore deeply. With a cry he ran down the incline. Suzanne was standing like a figure in stone. He reached her and caught her by the shoulder. Her startled eyes beheld him, and she recognised the masquerading lumberjack.

"You—a policeman!"

He bit his lip as he saw the heaving, tortured breast.

"Take me!" she cried. "I killed him—I meant to kill him—and brought him to this quiet place——"

"But why?"

"He—he murdered my brother."

"Your brother! Then you are——?"

"Suzanne Lepine. I spent a week on the trail to get him——"

"And you failed," he interrupted. "It's a good job I got there first."

She stared at him in astonishment, and he tapped his rifle significantly.

"You—you fired, too?" she quavered.

"Didn't you hear it?"

She shook her head, and he saw hope springing into the dark eyes.

"Stay here!" he said. "I'll have a look at him."

On his way over to the dead man he extracted a bullet from one of the rifle cartridges. What did it matter? Tighe was dead, and he wasn't worth the remorse of a girl of Suzanne's character. Her shot had taken Tighe over the heart. Mack swiftly extracted it, and, staining the unfired bullet, went back to Suzanne.

"Dead?" she whispered.

"Yes, and all through a little thing like that." He held up the rifle bullet that she might see it.

"Then—I—I missed?"

"There is only the one wound."

"Oh, thank God—thank God! I didn't know it would feel so dreadful——"

She turned her eye to the hill behind as the jingle of bells was heard. Bull with his team came slithering down the bank and stopped near Mack.

"You got him then?"

Mack nodded and slipped the bullet into his

pocket. It were better not to let Bull see it, for Bull would surely know that a .303 nickel bullet goes through and does not linger.

"Get him into the sled, Bull," he said. "I'll drive Miss Lepine back."

"Miss Lepine ! Gee, now I understand !"

But the most important thing no one ever knew, except Mack, and Mack thought the deception justifiable.

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LAST POST SALOON

It was common knowledge in Western Canada that as far as Peterville was concerned the Prohibition Law was as dead as mutton. The chief reason for this lay in the fact that Peterville was far removed from civilisation. There was no railway within two hundred miles, and presumably nobody cared whether Peterville existed or not.

Nevertheless, it was quite a considerable little township, nestling in a broad valley, and was proud of the fact that it was almost entirely self-contained. What traffic there was came up the river in the season and ceased entirely when the frost set in.

There were two rows of shops, a dance hall, and several saloons, all of which were doing remarkably well, for Peterville was dusty, and where there is dust there is thirst. But the trouble with the township was that it never knew where to draw the line, and the result was periodic outbursts of drinking, which inevitably led to violence.

"Of course," agreed the Commissioner of Police, "one must wink at a certain amount of drink running, but Peterville is a standing disgrace. The place is reeking with spirits. It must be stopped."

But no serious attempt was made until Peterville

celebrated the laying of the foundation-stone of its new town hall, and they did it with such thoroughness that the report of the free fight which followed trickled through to Regina and lots of other places.

As the direct result of this orgy Sergeant Mack found himself beating up the dusty trail with some dozen men at his disposal. The ubiquitous Bull Hicks rode beside him, flicking the flies off his horse's neck with a long twig.

"Phew," he groaned. "I don't blame them fellows at Peterville running in something wet and comforting. It must be a hundred and twenty in the shade."

Mack nodded, and tilted his hat farther over his eyes to keep off the burning sun. The horses moved forward at a crawl, and the heat shimmered over the prairie grass. The heat wave had lasted for over a fortnight, and everything was burned brown.

"Ever been to Peterville?" queried Bull.

"Yes."

"Then I surmise you're wise to the kind of folk we're up against?"

Mack was. The people were as clannish as it was possible to make them, and regarded the police or any one else who sought to interfere with their liberty as their common enemy. Mack knew there wasn't a man in Peterville who would lend the slightest assistance.

The same afternoon brought them in sight of the township, and Mack called a halt. To give any warning of their approach he felt sure would be fatal to any chance of success, so he decided on a lightning raid.

" You, Bull, take the Blue Star ; Gregory can have The Dragon, and I'll deal with the Last Post. Confiscate every drop you can find." The men were divided into three parties, and at the word of command all went whirling down the dusty trail. They entered Peterville at the full gallop, and found the place crowded with people. The saloons were doing great business, for they all dealt in provisions as well as drink.

At the sight of the raiding parties a terrific uproar broke out. Mack, bursting through the green swing doors of the Last Post, saw a dozen tumblers shivered to atoms by the vigilant proprietor and his assistants.

" The cellar, boys ! " he cried, and two men plunged through the door which led to the store. The proprietor, Gubbins, stood with his arms folded, wearing an expression black enough to kill.

" What's the game ? " he shouted. " Ain't you got nothing better to do ? "

Mack lifted a broken tumbler from the floor and smelt it.

" Whisky ! " he muttered.

"You don't know whisky from milk," sneered Gubbins. "If those darned policemen do any damage, they'll pay for it. I'm a law-abiding man, I am——"

Mack waved him aside and went through the stock of bottles behind the counter. They all contained quite innocuous drinks, and, judging by their fulness and the amount of dust on them, had not been touched for weeks.

"Satisfied?" asked Gubbins.

"Not yet. You've got the stuff here somewhere."

"Oh, have I—then why don't you find it?"

That, indeed, was the problem. The men downstairs left not a square foot unexamined. Even sealed cans were opened, only to reveal pork, or beans, or fruit. They came up at last and reported their failure.

"You surprise me," put in Gubbins. "Didn't you rip up the floor?"

Mack walked up to him.

"See here. I'll give you a chance. Hand over the spirits and that'll be the end of it. If you don't we'll find it and get you a long term."

"How can I hand over that I haven't got? You're making a darn mistake about me. I ain't seen a drop of real drink since I went to Communion."

A laugh went up from the crowd, and Mack, who hated ridicule, turned on his heel and went out. Later Bull and Gregory joined him with faces which clearly expressed the result of their work.

"It sure beats the band," drawled Bull. "Why, you can smell the stuff a mile off, and yet——"

"There's a fellow way down as drunk as a mule," put in Gregory. "I tried to make him talk, but he wasn't taking any. Where do they keep it?"

The raid having failed utterly, Mack realised that other methods would have to be adopted. One thing was certain—the whole business had been well planned in advance, and wherever the magic well lay, it was going to be no easy task to unearth it.

"Back to camp," grunted Mack. "The thing wants thinking over."

"Glory—how them fellows must be smiling," said Bull. "Well, we ain't through yet, I guess."

Another side of the problem which presented itself to Mack was the source of the main supply. That it came into Peterville regularly was certain, but from where remained a mystery. The river was the natural solution, and Mack decided to keep it well under observation.

Days passed without anything of importance happening. Nothing came up the river, and nothing of a suspicious nature went into the saloons, yet the town still reeked with spirits. The stuff was being

sold and consumed under Mack's very nose, and none was better aware of it than he.

"They've got us guessing," said Bull, and Mack for the time being was forced to agree. The police became the standing butt of the community. It was impossible to go into the town without being the object of cheap wit. Now and again one of Mack's men dropped on a man with a suspicious-looking bottle, only to find that it contained milk or something equally innocuous.

Then late one night Mack saw a light flashing across the plain beyond the township. He read the signal, which was in Morse—"Is all clear?" and guessed that from somewhere in the town an answer was being flashed. In a few seconds he was on his feet and shaking Bull into wakefulness.

"Bull, hustle yourself; there's a cargo of drink coming in. We're going to get it."

"Sure—where is it?"

"Due north from here. We'll need Gregory and another man."

The other two troopers were accordingly awakened, and in ten minutes the four horsemen were moving in the direction of the place where Mack had seen the light. They posted themselves along the road and waited events.

It was well past midnight when from out of the

darkness came the dull rumble of wheels. The moon was at the full and illuminated the road for some distance. Mack, from the shelter of a tree, saw a cart appear round a bend, laden with half a dozen barrels.

"S-sh!" he hissed. "Our luck is in."

He had scarcely breathed the words when Gregory's horse uttered a low hinny. Mack bit his lip as the oncoming vehicle stopped dead and a man leaped down from the seat. He was joined a second later by another, and the two talked together in whispers.

A few seconds passed, and then one of them came forward warily. That he scented danger was evident, and Mack knew that the first of the troopers would come into view soon. He signalled to the trooper to make his capture when the advancing man got alongside.

"Now!"

A horse leapt into the moonlight and its rider slewed round with a revolver in his hand, but his intended prisoner was like an eel. He dived under the horse, yelled a warning to his comrade behind and made for the river.

"Get him!" yelled Mack, and, leaving the refugee to Gregory and the fourth man, he and Bull rode towards the horse and cart.

But the second freebooter was no less agile than

his companion. Mack saw him making for the river, and fired his revolver. To head the man off was impossible, for big boulders made progress for the horse impossible.

"He's got away," grunted Bull. "Now, ain't that jest cussed?"

"Has Gregory got the other man?"

"Dunno, but we got the stuff."

That was certainly true. The barrels contained whisky and rum, and were evidently part of a large cargo concealed somewhere up the river. Gregory and his comrade came back to report failure, which was no more than Mack expected, for a man on foot was at a great advantage.

"Get this stuff overboard," said Mack.

A few bullets into the casks set the contents running into the parched earth.

"Ain't it a painful sight?" sighed Bull. "Would it be against regulations for a fellow to——"

"It would," snapped Mack. "Bull, you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"I am," replied Bull. "Well, there it is!"

Mack was examining the dusty trail. Nothing had been down it for some days, and the marks of the wheels were clearly outlined.

"Now for the main store," he muttered. "Bull, you can follow these tracks, eh?"

"Sure! I never thought of that."

Leaving the horse and cart to Gregory, the other three set off in file, Bull leading. Despite cross trails, Bull had no difficulty in hanging on to the tracks. In an hour they were among rocks in close proximity to the river. Bull found the place where the cart had halted and also footprints leading to a cavern.

"Here we are," he whispered. "We'll have to watch our steps here. I guess there are more guys inside."

But he was proved wrong. The interior of the cavern was empty save for the store of drink which it contained. There were more than a dozen casks, and all were full. While the work of confiscation was going on Bull nearly wept.

Mack and his comrades returned to camp to find Gregory there with the horse and cart and all the other men wide awake and talking. They quite imagined that their object was achieved and that the morrow would see them riding back to Regina. But Mack was by no means finished.

"Now we can devote all our attention to Gubbins and Company," he said.

"But he can't get any more supplies," argued Bull.

"For all we know the saloons may be stocked full of it. No, Bull, we're here to find out how the stuff can be sold and consumed under our noses. When we've done that we'll go home."

That the news of the big confiscation had reached the townspeople was obvious next day. They were less ready to jibe and more prone to glare. Among the few whom the troopers were on fairly good terms with was an attractive, dark-eyed girl of about twenty, named Gene Roland. Her father ran a poultry farm a mile from the township, and Gene came in each day to market the produce.

"So you've tracked the whisky down, sergeant?" she asked.

"Have I?"

"Of course you have. You needn't worry—everybody knows, and I guess you're the worst hated man in Peterville."

"Perhaps they'll love me when they find how much better they will be without it."

"There's something in that. I don't mind telling you I cheered like mad when I heard the news."

"Really!"

"Yep. I guess my father has been taking a deal more than is good for him. You've never met my father?"

"I think I have," replied Mack dryly. "I believe he was the gentleman I helped home one evening."

She laughed, but the next instant her eyes were earnest again.

"I guess it's no laughing matter," she sighed. "I wish we could get rid of it once and for all."

"Perhaps you will."

She shook her head, and Mack divined that she knew a great deal more than she was willing to admit. She knew exactly what happened to the drink when once it reached the saloons—the secret by which it was camouflaged—but from a sense of local patriotism she refused to divulge any information.

"You go right ahead," she urged. "Maybe you'll get an inspiration."

Then she laughed gaily and left him. During the next few days the troopers kept a close eye on the cavern by the river, but the freebooters had been quick to take a warning and were not seen again. By this time Mack fully expected to find a slacking off in the drink trade of the town, but it did not come to pass. He had ample opportunity to discover that the supply was still adequate, and the price had gone up a hundred per cent. according to rumour.

"Can you beat it?" exclaimed Bull. "They're making us look like thirty cents. There must be a ton of it on tap."

Mack was beginning to feel humiliated. Even if the supply gave out, as it must do before long, it was no antidote to his sense of failure. Gubbins and his fraternity had beaten the police in the matter of wits, and the knowledge rankled deep. One morning in the town he met Gene in charge of a market van packed with eggs.

"Any luck?" she queried.

"Not yet."

"I'm thinking you'll be here all winter."

"Perhaps. How is the farm going?"

"Quite well. Can I sell you any eggs? I'll guarantee them fresh."

"No, thanks." He poked his head inside the van.

"You've got a big cargo there."

"Yep, but I have as many as this every day. Have you seen my father anywhere? He rode in two hours ago."

Mack shook his head, but he guessed that Gene would find her parent at his usual rendezvous—the Last Post saloon. He felt sorry for the girl, for she was evidently the victim of her father's intemperate habits. While Roland lounged and drank and gossiped, Gene was working sixteen hours a day.

An hour later he dropped into the Last Post, and was greeted with a groan. Simultaneously several glasses were raised swiftly and their contents gulped. In the corner, sitting on an upturned box, was Gene's father, grinning from ear to ear.

"I thought you had gone," he said in an unsteady voice.

"Not yet."

"Well, it's about time," snarled Gubbins from behind the counter.

"We may do the journey back together," replied Mack quietly.

"What! You mean——"

Words failed him. His big hands gripped the counter, and he looked extremely dangerous.

"And a very kind invitation, too," put in the good-natured Roland. "Nothing like a scarlet tunic to give a fellow a sense of safety."

A roar of laughter went up. But Mack took the sting out of it by joining in. Roland, who saw there would be nothing doing with the sergeant looking on, rose and muttered something about "going home." He shook hands with Gubbins, blew a kiss to Mack, and then departed.

Mack, through the window, saw him mount his horse and go riding away. But he had gone scarcely a hundred yards when he fell off his horse and lay rubbing his ankle in the road. The horse went scampering down the trail towards home. Mack, realising that Roland was hurt, made his exit, and, leaping on his mount, rode up to where Roland was still rubbing his ankle.

"Hurt?" he queried.

"Sure. That darned horse——"

"It was your own fault. Come, I'll see you home. Your daughter has been looking for you."

He helped the dazed man into his own saddle and

made for the farm, which could just be seen in the distance.

"You're a good sort—good sort," droned Roland.
"But you're wasting your time here."

"We shall see."

Mack did not know that he was destined to
"see" and understand that very evening!

Gene, who had seen the riderless horse enter the farm, ran out to observe Mack and her father approaching the place. She made towards them with her hands clasped apprehensively.

"It's all right," assured Mack. "The horse bolted, and your father fell. There's nothing much wrong with him."

"Don't you believe it," complained Roland.
"I'll be confined to the house for a week, I guess."

"Good thing, too," murmured Mack. Then dismounting, he assisted the lame man into the house and desposited him on a couch which Gene indicated. Mack took off Roland's boot and displayed a swollen ankle.

"What's the best thing?" queried Gene.

"A cold water compress."

"I don't want no compress," growled Roland.
"You leave me alone. I want to sleep."

"You do as you're told," commanded Mack, and

he himself fashioned and fixed the bandage, whereupon Roland at once dropped into a heavy sleep.

"He's been drinking again," said Gene. "He simply can't leave it alone."

But Mack was gazing into a basket beside him, in which were half a dozen eggs. On the bottom of one of them was a queer little knob. He went to pick up the egg, when Gene quickly took the basket away.

"I want those," she said huskily. "This is the night on which I make my cakes."

What surprised Mack was that she should want them so hurriedly. Then there was that queer little knob——! He made a little hiss with his lips, and saw Gene's eyes flash him a quick glance.

"I'm interrupting you," he said. "I'll have to make a move."

He took the small hand which she extended, and felt it quiver in his. Then with a brief "Good-bye" he left the place and rode back to the township. By good fortune he arrived there as a man was leaving the Last Post with something in his hat. Mack drove nearer the sidewalk and saw that the contents of the hat were eggs. He removed his foot from the stirrup and kicked hat and contents into the air.

"What the——!"

Mack's eyes were fixed on the ground. Every one

of the eggs had broken, and from their interiors an unmistakable fluid was issuing—whisky. The man caught Mack's eye, gasped, and ran for all he was worth. Mack turned his horse and rode hard for the camp.

“ Bull ! ”

“ Hello ! ”

“ I want every man Jack. Get the boys together. I've solved the plot ! ”

“ Gee—that's fine ! ”

In a few minutes ten of the twelve policemen were mounted and waiting for orders.

“ Boys,” said Mack, “ the secret is eggs. Leave not a single egg whole in Peterville, and to-morrow we can hit the trail for home.”

A cheer went up, and the next moment the whole party was riding towards the township. The two small saloons were tackled first and were dealt with in quick time, for their supplies were comparatively small. Into the gutter went several scores of eggs, and the boots of the police shivered them to pulp.

“ Now for Gubbins ! ”

But Gubbins had heard the news. His large stock of eggs were in a store at the back, and Mack arrived there to find Gubbins and a couple of dozen dangerous-looking fellows mounting guard over the door.

“ Stand away ! ” he ordered.

"You sheer off," growled Gubbins. "We don't want no trouble with you."

Mack pointed to the door.

"At it, boys!"

The men dismounted, and, with revolvers drawn, charged the crowd. At the last moment Gubbins' pluck deserted him. His men broke, and the police entered the place and began to confiscate the stock. This was more than Gubbins could stand.

"Come on!" he shouted. "I'm darned if I'll——"

An egg, neatly thrown by Bull, hit him between the eyes. He looked so bewildered and comical that a laugh went up from his followers. The laugh altered the whole trend of events. Revolvers were thrust into pockets, and eggs were picked up as ammunition.

The combat went on for fifteen minutes, and men were literally drenched with whisky. When not a single intact egg remained both sides sat down and gasped for breath.

"Don't light a match, any one," said Bull, "or we'll sure go up with a bang."

Then every one laughed, Gubbins included.

"I guess you've won, sergeant," he said. "There ain't a thumbleful of spirits in the whole of Peter-ville."

"That's as it should be," replied Mack. "See

here, I ought to arrest you, but I'll forgo that pleasure if you'll take the hint and swear to keep on the right side of the law."

"That's a deal," agreed Gubbins. "I guess you'll see this town booming as a temperance centre afore long."

The next day the police took the homeward trail. Near the farm Mack ran into Gene.

"So you got it?" she asked.

"Yes. It's all cleaned up now."

"I'm glad of that," she replied. "We made a good thing out of it. All them eggs wasn't laid by our chickens—not on your life. We had a cargo of five thousand up the river. The saloons blew them out and pumped whisky into 'em. The holes were sealed up with wax."

"So I noticed."

"So that was how you guessed?"

"Yes. I'm sorry to interfere with your livelihood, but it had to be done."

"I'm glad," she replied, with a smile. "I've always wanted to run a real egg farm. Now I guess there'll be a chance. Good-bye, and good luck!"

Thereafter Peterville gained the reputation of being the quietest and best-behaved township in the West.

THE MAN WITH THE SCARRED FACE

SINCE the day when Miguel Costes crossed the American border line and waved his hand mockingly to his pursuers, Canada has had no peace. Miguel hailed from Mexico, from which country he had deemed it advisable to beat a hasty retreat. After spending over a year in American territory he arrived at a similar conclusion. To a man of Miguel's type the vast, unpopulated miles of Western Canada offered unique advantages.

Miguel wanted space to move in, and Canada provided this. But, above all things, Miguel wanted spoil, and even this was not lacking. When a man has a score of crimes to his credit he inevitably reaches a state of desperation which sticks at nothing, and this was precisely Miguel's present condition.

As a magnet attracts steel, so Miguel attracted to his banner a gang of desperadoes who, like himself, were past praying for. Miguel and his crowd of gunmen found it comparatively simple to swoop down from the hills on to some isolated farm and take away stock. If the farmer were indiscreet enough to put up a fight, Miguel was quite willing to oblige, for he had the courage born of superior force.

In his young days Miguel had been considered handsome. Certainly he was a fine figure of a man.

An inch or two under six feet, with dark, piercing eyes, and neat beard and moustache. But something had happened but a short time ago to spoil Miguel's beauty for ever. After a successful cattle raid he and his followers had dropped into a comparatively quiet township to toast the great occasion.

While they were engaged in painting the place red a solitary policeman had ridden in. Things being what they were, it would have been a perfectly natural and wise thing for the lone guardian of the law to have turned in his tracks and found some more hospitable resort. But this policeman was even more pugnacious than the average member of the N.W.M.P. As soon as he perceived the trouble and the cause of it, he took up a strategic position, and began to sting Miguel and company until they became literally mad for revenge.

The unequal combat lasted for over an hour. Three men were killed and half a dozen wounded. When at last they succeeded in cornering their enemy, he leapt over a ten-foot wall and called his horse to him with a peculiar noise from his lips.

Miguel was unfortunate enough to come into view as the horse and its rider broke across the open country. He fired and missed. Then the rider turned and fired back. Nor did he miss. The bullet scored the left side of Miguel's face and took with it the better part of his ear.

Pursuit proved fruitless, and Miguel was left to bemoan the loss of his beauty. He never forgot the face of the man who had injured him, and one day he was fortunate enough to identify him. A good piece of work had been achieved by the police, and the portrait of the man to whom most of the honour was due appeared in a weekly paper. Miguel gasped when he saw it, for he recognised his hated enemy.

"Sergeant Mack!" he hissed. "Very well, Sergeant Mack, one day we meet again, and then——!"

And on this burning summer afternoon fate conspired to give Miguel his chance. He was sitting in his almost impenetrable retreat on a rocky ledge above the river, when one of his men came riding into camp, the horse's mouth flecked with foam from being over-driven.

Miguel, who was playing dice with three other men, glanced down at the excited rider. The latter saw him, and after concealing his horse in a cavern, came scrambling up the rock.

"What's the matter, Juan—didn't you get the cartridges?" queried Miguel.

"Yes, but on the way back I ran into the police. I threw them off the trail by taking to the river."

Miguel frowned and pitched the dice idly. But Juan's next words caused him to start violently.

"There were six of them, and the man in charge was Mack, the fellow——"

"Mack! Are you sure?"

"Could any man mistake him? I ran right into their camp before I knew it. There was also the lean fellow they call Bull. He——"

But Miguel was not interested in Bull Hicks. The very name of Mack had aroused all the insensate hate within him. For months Mack had been on his trail, but never had he had the chance of meeting him. His hand wandered to his shattered ear, and a low curse left his lips.

"How many men you say?"

"Six."

"How far away?"

"Four miles."

Miguel's own band at the moment was reduced to twelve men, plus an Indian girl, who performed the office of cook and slave—a wild girl named Loze, whose father and brother Miguel had quietly disposed of two years before. Miguel counted the odds, and decided it was too dangerous to attempt an attack on Mack's party. He did not fear a raid on his lair, for nature provided insuperable barriers.

Being a man of some imagination, he pondered over an alternative plan to wreak his spite on his old enemy. He knew enough of Mack to feel that he was courageous to the extent of foolhardiness. With considerable doubt as to the result, he decided to put his scheme into operation.

He obtained a piece of writing paper and a pencil, and began to write a message. The first two attempts were not satisfactory, but the third time he read what he had written and, nodding his head, folded it up neatly and addressed it to Sergeant Mack.

“ Joe ! ”

The wretched-looking half-caste addressed rose to his feet and came across to his chief.

“ Three or four miles down river are a posse of policemen. Find them and deliver this message.”

Joe took the note with nervous fingers.

“ Sup-pose they arrest me ? ” he quavered.

“ Fool ! They do not know you. Tell them a horse-man stopped you and gave it to you. You can describe me if they ask.”

Joe nodded, but still seemed to regard the mission with considerable alarm.

“ You’ll deliver that note,” hissed Miguel. “ If not I will deal with you. When you come away find a place from which you can observe. If a single man rides forward take the short cut back and let me know. If the whole party comes ride to the hill yonder and stand on the summit. I will watch it.”

Joe gulped, thrust the note into his pocket, and a few minutes later went riding down the river. Miguel went on with his game of dice, but his interest in it had gone. He wanted Mack more than he wanted “ double sixes.” He was relying upon Mack’s

sublime faith in himself. In any case he ran no risk, for six policemen could never storm the rocky precipice on which he lived.

In a beautiful dell by the river Mack and his party were making a meal. They had given chase to the outlaw for over two miles, but were thwarted by the river.

"He's sure one of Miguel's party," said Bull as he sat munching biscuits and cheese. "I reckon we ain't far from their den."

"It's a pity half our fellows had to beat back to Regina," mused a trooper. "If we ever strike Miguel's camp we are going to have a tough proposition before us. He's not the man to run risks. Maybe we'd find a couple of score along with him."

Mack gazed blandly at the beautiful river scenery. The sun had scorched his face to a mahogany tint, in vivid contrast to the wide-set, steely-blue eyes that with the firm chin lent him the look of power. In every respect he was a man's man. His life had been led almost entirely among men. He understood them as he never hoped to understand women.

Bull, who knew Mack better than any other man in the corps, was dogmatic in his opinion. Mack was the born leader of men, dominating yet modest, self-sufficient yet no egoist. Bull, with a constitution like whipcord, admitted that when it came to the crucial test, Mack had him "beaten to a frazzle."

"I guess I was reared on tin tacks and bits of copper wire, and I ain't in the habit of complaining when my porridge is cold, but that fellow ain't natural. He makes other men look like suckling babes."

There was indeed some ground for such enthusiasm. But Mack's toughness was the toughness born of indomitable will-power. Everything in Mack's life was subjugated to duty. Even Bull at times was apt to grow lax, but Mack remained all day and every day at full tension.

"It's darned hard luck that fellow getting away," grumbled Bull. "He'll have warned the whole outfit by now."

"It makes no difference, Bull," replied Mack. "You can take it from me Miguel is well entrenched, and fears no surprise attack."

"What kind of a creature is he?"

"Dark as a Mexican can be, and as cruel. If we get him it's a corpse we'll take back. He'll never face a trial."

"Then I guess it will save a lot of time to shoot him at sight."

"It might. When you see a man with one ear and a half, and a complexion like Satan's, you can let loose."

"I'll remember that."

A stone rolled down the steep incline behind the

camp. Mack turned his head and caught sight of a figure in the cliff above. As he looked, something white whistled through the air and fell within a few yards of Bull. It was a stone wrapped in a piece of white paper. Bull stood up and secured the missile. At the same moment the thrower disappeared.

"What is it?" queried Mack.

"A note—it's got your name on it, too."

Mack extended his hand, and Bull put the crumpled paper between his fingers. Mack smoothed it out on his knee and read the pencilled words:—

"I am waiting by the three firs two miles up the river. Come alone and I will meet you as man to man. Bring no help, or your journey will be useless. Refuse, and I shall know you are a coward and a popinjay.—MIGUEL."

Six pairs of eyes were focused on Mack's face, but they learnt nothing from his expression. Suddenly he stood up, and, tightening his belt, made for his horse. In a few seconds he was mounted and ready for departure. Mack turned in the saddle.

"I want you fellows to hang around here for an hour or two. If I don't return by sundown you'd better get on Miguel's track. If I do return, there won't be any need."

"Ain't we in this funeral?" queried Bull.

"Not in the first round. There's a friend of mine

asking for a private interview. He's a special client of ours, and one oughtn't to refuse him."

"Miguel!" hissed Bull.

Mack turned his head and gazed up the river.

"Guv'nor," said Bull tensely, "there's a line beyond which it ain't wise for the toughest fellow to step. I reckon you're standing on it now."

"Very probably, but we've shut our eyes to that kind of boundary more than once, Bull, haven't we? If things don't go well up yonder you can try your hand to-morrow. So long!"

They watched him riding down the river bank—an impressive figure on the lean, grey broncho. Bull punched the air with his fist, and swore deeply.

"Boys, I call that suicide."

"You think it's a ruse?"

"Sure. Would a skunk like Miguel face a fellow of Mack's size without a gang of gunmen hidden in the bush?"

"Then let's ride after him."

"Nope. Orders is orders—but it's enough to make a chap weep tears of blood!"

The worthy Bull was tortured with thoughts of horrible possibilities. That Mack could be foolish enough to take Miguel at his word was amazing, for even Bull had heard enough about the Mexican to know that he was capable of the meanest action in the world.

And Mack ? Mack was no fool in his estimate of Miguel. It was possible that Miguel might turn up alone, but highly improbable. Mack had been drawn to the rendezvous by the one weakness which the wily Mexican had banked on—his pride. To let such a challenge pass was impossible, even though the danger was ten times what it was.

As he rode along he laughed softly to himself, for the situation was peculiar. Never before had such a thing happened to him, and it was its novelty which appealed to him. After a mile or so he ceased to let his mind wander, and was alert for any sudden attack. But nothing of the kind happened.

He turned a bend, and saw before him the three fir trees, and under them the tall figure of his challenger. His eyes roved from one side of the river to the other, but everything was quiet, and it looked as if Miguel had for once played the game. He halted within fifty yards of the standing man.

“ Well—here we are ! ”

“ So you’ve come ? ”

“ Of course. The pleasure of meeting you was so irresistible. What’s the programme ? ”

“ You are alone ? ”

“ That was the condition, I think.”

Miguel nodded, and displayed his teeth in a grin of open hate.

“ Last time we meet you do this.” He touched his

smashed ear with the tip of his finger. "Maybe you remember that?"

"Quite well," replied Mack quietly. "I remember lots of other things, too—two murdered men in Montana, a wholesale slaughter of Indians at Crow's Nest. That is why I welcome the chance of killing you."

"Enough!" hissed Miguel. "You shall have your chance now. We shoot until we kill—twenty-five paces. I am ready."

Mack leaped from his horse, drove it into the shelter of a rock, and drew his revolver. He marched towards Miguel until the latter called for him to stop. Then Mack realised that he was at a disadvantage, for while he wore a scarlet tunic, Miguel had a coat that harmonised with the immediate rocky surroundings.

"Ready?" snapped Miguel.

"Aye. Who fires first?"

Miguel looked up at the sun, which was temporarily clouded.

"We fire together when the sun reaches my face," he hissed. "After that as we please, but we do not move."

Mack nodded, and waited for the sunlight. He saw it speeding down the river. Nearer and nearer it came. He raised the revolver and pulled the trigger at the exact moment. The two shots rang out

together, but both men remain unscathed. How he had missed Mack could not imagine, for he was an expert shot, but there was no time to ponder over that. Miguel fired, and the bullet sang by his head.

Crack ! Crack ! He looked to see Miguel fall, but although the latter staggered in a strange manner he remained where he was. Mack was so astonished that he lost valuable time. The next instant Miguel's weapon belched fire, and Mack's revolver dropped to the ground. Something hot and wet was trickling inside his coat, and the fingers which had held the revolver were numbed.

"Got you !" cried Miguel. "The next one will be nearer the bull."

Mack snatched up his weapon with his left hand and fired again and again, but a film had come over his eyes, and his aim was bad. Miguel, with three rounds to go, was in no great hurry. It gave him the greatest pleasure to keep his injured opponent in suspense.

"Do not run," he sneered ; "for I shall certainly kill you before you reach your horse."

Mack curled his lip contemptuously. He raised his weapon and fired the last shot. A curious thing happened. Miguel staggered, as he had done before, and Mack saw the bullet fall to the ground. His eyes were at once open to the cause. It accounted for Miguel's astonishing display of valour. Somewhere

under the coat he wore was a breastplate or some other means of protection, and the soft leaden bullets had failed to penetrate it.

"You skunk!" he cried, and, throwing care to the winds, sprang across the intervening space, leaping from side to side as he ran.

Miguel fired wildly and missed—twice. Before he could use the revolver again Mack was on him. He hit out with his empty weapon and caught Miguel under the chin. The Mexican let loose a howl of pain and grappled with his assailant. Mack, with one arm useless, yet proved to be a dangerous combatant. Using his legs, he put Miguel on his back and fell on him.

The fall, however, brought an awful pain to his wound, and permitted Miguel to turn the tables on him. Lying on his back, he looked up to see the Mexican's dark eyes flashing fire and the barrel of the revolver within six inches of his head.

"Now I kill you. Say your prayers!"

Mack saw the deadly intent in the cruel face, and knew that he was very close to the border line. "You're the dirtiest thing that ever breathed," he growled. "Shoot, and be damned to you!"

Then something totally unexpected happened. From out of the low bushes on the hillside a lithe, feminine figure sprang like a panther. She was Loze, the Indian girl, and she carried a thick cudgel in her

hand. Mack, gazing into eternity, saw her only when she reached Miguel, and, raising the club, brought it down on his head. Miguel grunted, and fell sideways, half-unconscious. Mack scrambled to his feet and looked at the girl.

"Go ! Go !" she cried. "Other men up there—see everything. Come here very quick."

Mack glanced at the place to where she pointed, and saw a dozen figures rise from the undergrowth. He uttered the usual horse-call, and his horse came towards him instantly. Then he was compelled to choose between Loze and Miguel, for it was certain he could not take both. A few seconds brought him to a decision—Loze must come first. He clambered into the saddle and leaned over.

"Up here—quick !"

Her eyes spoke her gratitude, for after what she had done it would mean death to remain. Mack made away just as Miguel's men, now mounted, descended the hill into the valley. He leaned forward and whispered in the broncho's ear. The horse understood, and shot forward like a hound from the leash.

"Down !" he whispered to the girl behind him.

Crack ! Crack ! Half a dozen bullets clove the air, but failed to find their mark. The extreme danger point was passed, but the end was not yet. The terrific spurt could not be maintained, and half a

mile farther on Mack realised that the pursuers were gaining. He quickly turned the horse towards a rocky pile and dismounted, beckoning Loze to do likewise. Then he took his rifle from the trapping, and slapping the horse on the neck, said sharply, "Home, laddie—home."

The broncho understood what was expected of him. He gave one look at his beloved master, and, freed of his burden, made a magnificent burst for the camp, where Bull and the other troopers were waiting.

Mack heard the pursuers coming down the valley, and hoped they would be misled by the horse's tracks, but they had already seen the riderless broncho in the distance, and guessed what had happened.

"He's around here somewhere," said a voice.

Mack led Loze through the undergrowth towards a clump of trees. The blood from his wound was dripping from his sleeve, and Loze's eyes fastened on it.

"You hurt. Me bind up wound, yes?"

"No time. Quick, get behind that tree, and don't expose yourself."

"Loze not afraid—now."

"No, but I am. The battle is about to open."

"But you cannot shoot. Your arm——"

Mack proved she was wrong the next moment. He

found a natural rest for the rifle across a low branch, and sent one of Miguel's men biting the earth in agony. The first blood drawn, the enemy were thoroughly warmed up.

The woods rang with reports. Mack brought another man down, but was compelled to leave the tree to avoid being encircled. A running fight ensued, Mack now using his wounded arm, despite the intense pain engendered. Loze was a true daughter of battle, and relapsed into wild whoops from time to time.

"You're a great little girl," whispered Mack.

"You very fine warrior. My fader him big warrior, too. But Miguel shoot him in back."

"He would," grunted Mack. "Look out!"

Loze ran sideways and escaped a bullet. Then Mack's magazine ran out, and valuable time was lost in recharging it.

"Men yonder—behind bushes," whispered Loze.

Mack had seen them, and realised that the position was growing more dangerous. The trees were now closer together, and afforded great opportunities for the enemy to encircle him. He was taking aim at a ruffian on his right when a wild cry came from Loze. He turned swiftly to see a big bearded man on the point of firing a revolver at him. There was no time to move his body out of the line of fire. He knew quite well, and Loze knew it too.

She sprang forward with her arms outspread to shield the man who had tried to help her. There was a loud report, a queer little sigh, and Loze collapsed, carrying in her breast the bullet meant for Mack. The man who had fired was so astonished at this amazing act that he gave Mack time to get the rifle in action, and a second later he lay near his brave victim. Mack forgot all about the remaining men, and knelt by the side of the dying girl.

“Are you——?”

“Loze—go—to her fader and brudder. Very glad help white man—very glad——”

The eyelids fluttered and she was gone. Then Mack seemed to go mad. He changed from the defensive to the attack, running at every man he saw, and acting as if he had never been wounded. He shot two more men, and then realised that there was firing from another direction.

He turned and made that way, but a few seconds later stood stark still as a figure with a bandage round its head broke through the trees. It was Miguel!

“Mack!” snarled Miguel, and raised the rifle which he carried. But Mack was quicker. A lightning movement—a pull on the trigger, and Miguel Costes’ account was closed for ever.

Mack staggered up to the body, and tore open the brown coat. Underneath was a fine coat of mail, with a dozen links shattered by the fearful velocity of the

nickel bullet. Mack turned away, feeling sick and faint from loss of blood. Then he remembered Loze, and decided to take her body away. He found it, and slinging his rifle over his shoulder managed to stagger away with her. . . . There was no firing now . . . he was vaguely aware of that.

He halted and swayed as some figures emerged from the trees. Then his half-blinded eyes recognised the lean figure of Bull, and he waved his hand weakly. Bull came running forward, and stared at the figure lying across Mack's shoulder.

"How the—— Here, I'll take her."

"No one is going to take her but I. If you want to carry anything go back there. You'll find Miguel."

"So you got him?"

"Yes, I got him. It's curious how we get them in the end, Bull. Wonderful luck!"

But Bull didn't call it luck. He brought back Miguel like a sack of wheat, and ten minutes later was binding up Mack's wound with the gentleness of a woman.

"How many prisoners?" asked Mack.

"Only three—the rest were blamed silly enough to get killed. How's that?"

"Fine," replied Mack, and turned his eyes reverently to the small form that lay under a blanket near him. Then he sighed curiously, and Bull wondered mightily!

THE HAUNTED FARM

SOME ten miles south of Saskatoon was a small settlement known as Snowflake. It was a peaceful spot, nestling on the banks of a creek amid magnificent scenery. The citizens numbered about three hundred, and over half of these had arrived during the past few years, for the vicinity offered great opportunities for farming, watered as it was by a maze of creeks and a small lake.

For some time past Snowflake had figured in the local Press, for strange to relate it boasted a ghost. It was true that few people had actually seen the apparition, but every one believed in it and took a certain amount of pride in the fact.

"There was a fellow here a month back who met it face to face," related Swindy, the owner of the chief store in the township. "It scared him that much that he packed up and went to Winnipeg."

His two auditors, Sergeant Mack and Bull Hicks, members of the N.W.M.P., winked at each other as they pocketed the tobacco which they had dropped in to purchase. Swindy saw the amused expression and shrugged his shoulders.

"What kind of a thing is it?" inquired Bull.

"Injun," replied Swindy abruptly.

"And where does it walk?" asked Mack, trying to appear serious.

"Round about the Fogwell Farm—a mile back. The story goes that years ago a Blackfeet Indian took refuge there. The place didn't belong to Fogwell in them days. Anyway, the Injun was loaded down with gold-dust. The next morning he was found with his throat cut. The fellow who ran the farm was arrested and tried, but he wasn't convicted. A while after he sold the place and disappeared. It was after Fogwell took possession that the ghost appeared."

"I see—the Blackfeet?"

"Sure. He mopes round the house in full war paint. Fogwell told me that he's even been seen in the house."

"Well, what does he want anyway?" asked Bull.

"How do I know. Why don't you ask him?" snapped Swindy, who was regretting having mentioned the matter at all.

"Has the thing been seen of late?" asked Mack.

"Yes—last week. Fogwell came in here with a face like a sheet. I reckon he won't stay on much longer."

Mack knew Fogwell by sight. He was a man of about fifty and had a delicate wife and a pretty daughter. The house which he now occupied was a comparatively new one, presumably built by the

man who had been charged with the murder of the Blackfeet. Fogwell had appeared to be a level-headed fellow and not the kind of person to indulge in wild flights of imagination.

"Well, I never seen a ghost yet," drawled Bull. "When I do I'll try a couple of .45's on him. If they don't stop him walking maybe I'll be demented."

"You may be that before you're much older," retorted Swindy. "Mighty queer things can happen in this world."

Mack and Bull left a few minutes later, and mounting their horses rode slowly south.

"It's curious how Swindy can believe that bunk," reflected Bull.

"It's more curious still that Fogwell can believe it. But I seem to remember the Blackfeet murder."

Bull laughed amusedly as he thought how absurd the idea of a ghost was. He looked at Mack's horse and pursed his lips, for the chestnut broncho was decidedly off colour and had been since early morning.

"Ain't very spry, is he?" he remarked.

"No, I wish I'd bedded him down at Snowflake. Looks like fever."

Their road ran close to the Fogwell Farm, and a few minutes later they met Fogwell himself driving a wagon of hay. He saluted them with a rather wan smile and stopped to permit them to overtake him.

"Fine spell of dry weather," said Mack. "Is that the last of the hay?"

"Yes, we've been fortunate." His eye roved to the horse. "What's wrong with him—a cold?"

"Looks like it," replied Mack. "I'll have to get a 'vet' to have a look at him at the next township."

"He ought to lie up at once," advised Fogwell. "Why not stay here the night—you'd be welcome and I'd send over to Snowflake for old Simmons. He'll diagnose him, I guess."

Mack, who hated to work a sick horse, decided to accept the invitation, much to Bull's delight, for Bull had a weakness for applejack, of which Fogwell always kept a good stock.

It was already late afternoon, and by the time the horses were attended to the sun was very low in the west. Fogwell, with his customary courtesy, had reserved two places at the table and Mack and Bull found themselves in the family circle.

Violet Fogwell, a slim and refined girl of about twenty, sat next to Mack and chatted about many things while the meal was in progress, but Mack noticed that despite her laughter she suffered from a curious nervousness, and when her fine eyes met those of her father a silent message passed between them. When Bull, after an extremely pleasing meal, raised the question of the ghost, Mrs. Fogwell started

so violently that it was clear she did not regard the subject with any levity.

" You—you've heard about it then ? " murmured Violet.

" A little," replied Mack. " But is it really true ? " Violet looked at her parents. After a brief silence Fogwell unburdened his soul.

" It's true," he said tersely. " At first I paid no attention to rumour and certain strange noises, but when the thing appeared I must confess it was disturbing."

" When do you see it ? "

" At first very infrequently, but lately it has appeared regularly—every Friday night."

" Why, to-day is Friday," ejaculated Bull.

" Yes, I know." Fogwell clenched his fist. " For two pins I'd sell up and seek a less cursed place. It's getting on my wife's nerves."

" Mother has never been the same since we came here," whispered Violet. " I've tried to discover what the thing wants in the hope that we might get rid of it somehow, but now I'm scared too."

" You mustn't lose your nerve," pleaded Mack. " Ghosts are sheer superstition—tricks of the brain."

" This one isn't," said Fogwell. " I never believed in such things myself until I saw it with my own eyes."

Mack thought it best to drop the subject, for both Violet and her mother were obviously unnerved. In the pleasanter conversation which followed they forgot all about the ghost, and the evening broke up with laughter and song.

Mack's room was next to Bull's at the rear of the house, and looked out into a patch of wooded land. The moment he laid his head on the pillow he went to sleep, and judging from the noise which penetrated through the partition Bull had done likewise.

It was about an hour after that Mack awoke with a start. From somewhere below a door slammed and was followed by a shuffling noise. The sounds grew more distinct and then appeared to come from the passage. Mack lighted a candle and opened the door. At the next door was Bull, also with a lighted candle.

"Did you hear a noise, Mack?" he asked in a whisper.

"Yes—it has stopped now."

But at that moment the shuffling sound commenced again. A cold gust of wind came along the passage and both candles were extinguished.

"Got a match?"

"No. I——"

The words were frozen on Bull's lips, for the moonlight suddenly struck through the long window on the landing, and there, standing with his brown arms

folded on his chest, was a magnificent figure. He was a tall, hatchet-faced Indian in full war paint, and he stood as still as if he was carved in mahogany.

"By gosh!" ejaculated Bull.

"Steady!" whispered Mack. "We'll have a talk with him."

He marched towards the figure, but the moon became obliterated again and when he reached the spot he found nothing.

"A light, Bull!"

Bull soon appeared with the lighted candles, but a search revealed positively no trace of the ghost. But this time Fogwell and Violet had appeared in dressing-gowns.

"Did you see it?" queried Fogwell.

"Sure!" ejaculated Bull. "And next time I see it, I'll have my gun with me."

"It's a trick," said Mack. "You can rest assured that fellow is real flesh and blood."

"I wish I could believe it."

"You shall," said Mack. "You say it walks every Friday?"

"Yes—I has done so for the past two months."

"Right. We'll be on hand next Friday to deal with it."

On the following Friday Mack and Bull turned up at the farm. Fogwell was out, but Violet welcomed them warmly, as also did her mother.

"I'm so glad you've come," said Violet. "We've had a terrible time."

"In what way?"

"The—ghost. We have seen or heard it every night since you were here. Father is distracted on mother's account and is on the point of selling out."

"But surely no one will buy it in a hurry?"

"Swindy, the storekeeper at Snowflake, knows a man who is anxious to come here and is not at all nervous."

"But it would mean ruin to your father?"

"Yes, in a way. But the offer was quite a fair one."

"So it has come to that?"

She nodded, and then added impulsively:

"But you will help us, won't you? Talk to my father and make him see that the thing has to be fought out. Perhaps if we wait a little longer we shall solve the mystery."

"We are going to solve it within the next few days," said Mack grimly.

"We sure are," agreed Bull. "If that ghost has got any gumption he'll stop promenading right now."

Fogwell returned an hour later and seemed immensely pleased to see his visitors.

"Are you staying the night?" he asked.

"If we may—and if it is necessary. I hear you have seen it again?"

" Yes, once in the house and several times outside. Once I fired at it, but only succeeded in jarring my wife's nerves. I'm certain the thing is genuine. It moves so curiously and seems to disappear into thin air."

To beguile the evening away the two policemen and Fogwell and Violent played cards, but all their interests were elsewhere. It was towards ten o'clock that they heard a shriek from upstairs.

" Mother ! " ejaculated Violet.

Fogwell ran madly up the stairs, with Mack at his heels. They reached the landing to find Mrs. Fogwell in a dressing-gown staggering from her room. Fogwell clasped her in his arms.

" Oh—oh ! " she moaned.

" What is wrong, dear ? "

" I saw it—just now—in my room. It came close to my bed and then turned and walked out again."

Fogwell uttered a low hiss and Mack ran to the window, but there was no sign of the ghostly visitor nor no sound from without. Bull, who was on the stairs, suddenly bent down and stared with his eagle eyes at something quite invisible to the others.

" That's funny ! " he muttered. " There's a footprint here that ain't been made more than an hour, I'll swear. There's earth from outside."

" It can't be mine," said Fogwell. " My slippers are clean."

"It may be mine," said Mack.

"Nope," replied Bull emphatically. "I guess the ghost left that. He's a mighty heavy fellow for a ghost."

The discovery had the effect of arousing hope in the breast of Fogwell, and Violet looked excited.

"You think he has gone out again?" queried Violet.

A search of the house was begun, and every cupboard and possible hiding-place ransacked, but without result. Mack bit his lips.

"He is certainly not inside. Bull, we will watch from the outside on the chance of his coming again. Fogwell, will you sit up for a bit and leave all the lights on and the shutters open?"

"And if he appears inside?"

"Fire your gun and we'll understand and stop him from getting away."

Fogwell, who still seemed a little nervous, nodded and took a seat by the fire, whilst Violet accompanied her mother to her bedroom. Bull, with a very tense expression on his face, took up his revolver and looked to assure himself it was fully loaded.

"If I see him you ain't expecting me to shake hands with him?" he asked.

"If he doesn't stop when you tell him you can let loose," said Mack. "But I fear we have missed our chance."

They left the house, and after a brief consultation separated, Mack finding a sheltered spot at the rear of the building and Bull at the front. For a long time nothing happened. Mack, feeling that the vigil was useless, was about to whistle for Bull when a loud report came from the house. In a second he was on his feet and moving forward. At the corner of the house he saw Bull in the moonlight with his deadly weapon ready for action.

“Halt!”

The fierce word came from Bull’s lips. Mack gasped as he realised that the ghost must have come into view. He doubled round the corner to behold a strange sight. Bull was standing facing the moving figure of the Indian, which was not more than a dozen yards away from him.

“Did you get that?” snapped Bill. “Stop right now or I’ll drop you.”

But the figure glided on as if it heard not a word and cared nothing for Bull or anything else in the world. Mack, puzzled and interested, saw Bull’s weapon come down and craned his neck forward to see what would happen next.

Crack! Bull had fired—and missed. To see Bull miss an object so large at a dozen yards distance was the most amazing thing on earth. Crack! Crack!—and still the ghostly form glided forward. Mack, realising that Bull was held spellbound, rushed

after the retreating form, but lost it in the wood.

He came back to Bull to find that worthy positively speechless. He took him by the arm, but Bull was staring down the muzzle of his revolver. At last he found his speech.

"Suffering rattlesnakes! He's thin air, I tell you. The bullets went slick through him. Could I miss a man at that distance—could I?"

"It's odd," replied Mack. "Pull yourself together—you're as nervy as Fogwell."

"But you saw it—you saw me shoot. Why didn't I drop him?"

"You lost your nerve."

"Cut that!" snapped Bull. "I tell you I had a line on him that would have taken the buttons off his waistcoat—if he had one."

Fogwell came from round the house and approached them in breathless excitement.

"Didn't you get him?"

"Nope," replied Bull. "He ain't human, I guess."

"Nonsense!" put in Mack. "Bull managed to miss him in some unaccountable fashion. I ran after him, but lost him in the wood. Well, we can do no more to-night."

They went indoor. Bull as savage as a badger at Mack's imputation. He was on the verge of retiring for the night when his gaze fell on a bullet which

was lying on the carpet in the corner. He picked it up and gave a low whistle.

"Now, ain't that wonderful!"

"What?"

Bull broke open the revolver and displayed the contents of the six chambers in his hands. Three of the cartridges had been fired and the other three had their bullets extracted.

"Bull, I humbly beg your pardon," said Mack.

"That's all right," replied Bull. "But who pulled out all my bullets?"

"The 'ghost,'" cried Mack. "He must have seen your gun lying on the table from outside, and put up the scene in Mrs. Fogwell's room to give him an opportunity of rendering the cartridges harmless."

"That's it," said Fogwell. "So he is human, after all!"

"He is," replied Mack. "And we're going to get him."

That the ghost would not walk again while the two policemen were in the vicinity was patent to Mack. With a view to throwing a red herring across the trail, he and Bull said "Good-bye" to Fogwell the next morning, after making an arrangement with him to signal from the window with a red lantern if the ghost walked again.

"Where are we going?" queried Bull.

"Snowflake. From there I can see Fogwell's window. If you should signal at any time we can make the farm in less than five minutes by hard riding."

"It will give him time to escape."

"It may—but he won't be in such a hurry if he thinks we are not on hand."

"What's the game, anyway?"

"I don't know—yet."

There was something in the tone of the words which caused Bull to look keenly at his companion. That Mack had an idea was certain, but Bull was not good at imagination, and was content to wait until Mack enlightened him. They rode into Snowflake and stopped to have a word with Swindy, who was standing at the door of the store.

"You're back soon," said Swindy. "Had some kind of trouble?"

"No—we planned to make Snowflake to-day," replied Mack. "How are things with you?"

"Oh, so-so. The weather is holding out well, ain't it?"

Mack agreed, and gazed towards the distant farm from which they had just come.

"Fogwell seen anything more of his ghost?" he laughed.

Swindy rammed a wad of tobacco into his pipe and shook his head slowly.

"Fogwell is mighty upset," he said. "Talks about selling the place and clearing out."

"That would be a pity. Besides, he would find it difficult to get a purchaser with this story going about."

Swindy agreed, and hearing a call from the store, begged to be excused. Mack and Bull went riding down the street. The whole day was spent in the vicinity, Mack taking a delight in gossiping with the scattered residents.

"Ain't we wasting time?" complained Bull.

"Wasting time!" retorted Mack. "Why, we've found our man."

Bull stared at him in astonishment.

"What the ——!"

"I'll show you to-night," said Mack. "I was just anxious to discover if there was an Indian living round about."

"But there ain't."

"No—that's just the point."

Mack had a tantalising way of retaining information. Bull was perforce compelled to wait his companion's pleasure. At dusk they pulled their horses into a clump of trees situated above the town. Mack sat on his haunches peering down into the valley, through which ran the lighted street like a golden snake.

"What are you looking for?" queried Bull.

"Patience, O blind one," mocked Mack.

Bull grunted, and not being at all interested in the twinkling lights of Snowflake went to sleep. He was awakened two hours later by Mack.

"Hallo—what's wrong?"

"Nothing. Everything is right. Get the horses—we are going to Fogwell's."

"You got a clue?"

"Yes—hurry!"

A few minutes later they were riding quite leisurely towards the farm. They were within fifty yards of it when from the front windows flashed a red light.

"Sooner than I expected," whispered Mack. "Ride round the back, Bull. If you see the ghost this time get him—collar him."

Bull had scarcely disappeared when from a door on Mack's side of the house appeared the Indian. Mack rode straight at him. The Indian heard him and turned to run, but the horse thundered down on him. Mack pulled his mount up and dropped like a log on the vague figure.

"Damn!"

Mack laughed and jerked his prisoner to his feet. Bull came riding to his assistance.

"Have you got him?"

"Yes." He turned to the sullen prisoner. "March, and don't try any tricks."

The front door opened in response to Mack's rap, and Fogwell uttered a cry of joyful surprise. Mack pushed his prisoner into the large sitting room, where Violet Fogwell and her mother were seated. The latter raised a little cry of alarm.

"It's all right," said Mack. "The ghost will worry you no more."

"But who is he, and why did he do it?"

Mack laughed and pointed to the rather disconsolate figure.

"Doesn't any one recognise him?"

Violet shook her head, and Fogwell stepped closer. The latter started and uttered an exclamation of amazement.

"Why, it's ——"

Mack stretched out his hand and removed the skull-cap and feathers, revealing a closely-cropped head. Then he rubbed his finger on the brown neck and held it up to show the stain of grease paint.

"Why, it's Swindy!"

"Yes—Mr. Silas Swindy most admirably disguised." He turned to the embarrassed store-keeper.

"This is a serious business, Swindy."

"It is," grunted Swindy. "If it wasn't I wouldn't have done it."

"Why did you do it? What is the game?"

Swindy remained silent, and Fogwell, angered at the trouble he had been put to and the effect of this

apparently senseless trick, raised his fist threateningly. Swindy gulped, and then decided to make things clear.

"I am English by birth," he said. "I only came to Canada ten years ago, and I came for a definite purpose. My brother had always been a wanderer and I lost sight of him for many years. One day I got a telegram to say he was in a London hospital and dying from consumption. I went to see him, and before he died he told me of his life out here, of the disappointments and privations. When he had given up all hope of making a fortune he was lucky enough to hit upon a silver mine. He had scarcely begun to dig for samples to take away with him when he got a bad attack of pneumonia. He filled up the hole he had sunk and managed to get down to Winnipeg. The pneumonia went, but it started consumption and he was afraid to venture north again. The illness had got him badly, and when he knew that his days were numbered his one desire was to get home. He managed to get to London and to warn me in time——"

He halted, and Mack saw that he was deeply affected.

"What has all that to do with your——"

"Surely you can guess? I came out here with the location of the silver only to find that the land had been bought and a house built on it—this house."

"This house!"

"It was a mighty bad blow to me, for I had spent most of my savings in getting here. Anyway, I had to grin and bear it. When the last owner went away the house was for sale, and I tried hard to raise money to buy it, but failed. Then when it had been bought by Fogwell here my aunt went and died and left me enough cash to have bought what I wanted. It made me mad to think of my rotten luck. I determined to get what my brother had died for—— Well, you know the rest."

"You were trying to scare me out?" asked Fogwell.

"I was. It was low-down, but I didn't mean any harm to any one. I was willing to pay a fair price for the farm and the land."

Fogwell frowned, not quite knowing how to act in the circumstances. He looked at his wife, and she smiled as he had not seen her smile for many months.

"Hadn't we better bury the hatchet, James?" she pleaded. "After all, it is very hard luck on Mr. Swindy."

"I suppose it is, but silver or no silver, I am not going to spoil my farm in excavating."

He glared at Swindy, and the storekeeper inclined his head.

"Nor would I if I was in your place," he said. "I reckon I've been a damn fool, and I'd be glad

if you'd try and forget it, Fogwell. I'll try and make amends."

Violet looked at her father and smiled happily as he extended his hand to Swindy, who took it eagerly.

"Well, that's that," sighed Bull. "I guess we're through with this, Mack?"

Mack nodded, and a few minutes later the pair of them were riding under the moon.

"We never asked him how he managed to get into the house," ruminated Bull.

"An old tunnel from the wood into the cellar. That was where he changed his clothes."

"Maybe you're right. Wal, I reckon that's the last of the Snowflake ghost."

And it was.

THE FUGITIVE

ALL through the autumn the Saskatoon Patrol had been engaged in a difficult and unsuccessful task. The quarry was a young man, described as short, dark, and wearing a soft wide-brimmed hat, who had held up a bank in Calgary and escaped with notes to the tune of several thousand dollars. The police had tracked him from one place to another, but had lost him in the wide stretch of country between Saskatoon and Regina.

Winter found Sergeant Mack and his party still hot on the scent, but success seemed as far away as ever. Rumours came from various sources, and the first vague description of the robber was later supplemented by further details. He had a scar on his right cheek and limped slightly, was last seen making for Whispering Creek on a black broncho, which he had stolen en route.

"This is a nice game, anyhow," grumbled Bull Hicks, who found the game of hide-and-seek far from his liking. "This fellow will keep us out all the winter."

"I shouldn't be surprised," returned Sergeant Mack coldly. "There are plenty of means of getting food when one has a pocketful of bank notes."

Besides, this man seems quite popular in the neighbourhood."

"Sure. Some one is helping him. That horse wasn't stolen, I guess."

They were posted on a slight elevation which overlooked the dazzling white plain towards the North. The other members of the party were patrolling east and west respectively, signals being exchanged by means of a black flag. It was the black flag which Mack was looking for now. He swept the horizon with a pair of powerful binoculars, and at last located some of his scattered men.

"Must be Gregory," he muttered. "Give 'em a wave, Bull."

Bull came to the brow of the hill and waved the flag to and fro until the observers in the far distance saw it and commenced to send a message in morse. Mack spelt it out letter by letter.

"NO SIGN ALL DAY. CAMPING HERE.
—GREGORY."

"Looks as if he'd got clean away," mused Bull. "We ain't heard a word of him for a week."

"He can't get away," said Mack. "B Troop is holding the river. It's open country in that direction. No, he must beat this way if he wants to stand the slightest chance."

Bull sighed and threw down the flag. It was nearing sunset, and the air was intensely cold. Their

camp was close by—a kind of dell surrounded by trees, with a wall of rock on the northern side, which kept off the prevailing wind and made the place comparatively warm. In the centre of the open space a large fire was burning, emitting aromatic odours as it crackled in the dry air.

“I guess the fellow lies close all day, and does his travelling at night,” reflected Bull.

Mack nodded. Like Bull, he was a little tired of the cat-and-mouse game. But the capture of the robber was a matter of some importance, for no less than three banks had been held up during the past six months, and the Commissioner of Police had been subjected to a lot of very cutting remarks.

“I want this man, Sergeant Mack,” he had said. “I rely upon you to uphold the prestige of the corps.”

There was scarcely need for the remark, for Mack had never yet failed to get his man. He had gone out from Regina with the fixed intention of staying out until he had achieved his object, and Bull, who knew him like a book, groaned as he realised that nothing short of a universal cataclysm would deter Mack from his purpose.

“Maybe he corpsed,” remarked Bull. “It was cold enough last night to have freezed a polar bear.”

“Then we will find his body,” retorted Mack.

"Bull, you'll have to work up a little more enthusiasm."

"I can't," grumbled Bull. "If there's one thing which gets my goat, it is prowling around looking for something which don't appear to exist. I wouldn't care if we only got a glimpse of what we're after, but this darned——"

Mack put his fingers to his ears. Self-confident as he was, he had a queer premonition that on this occasion he was going to fail. Yet he could not see how it was coming to pass, for he had posted his men well. They formed a wide circle over a radius of twenty miles, and somewhere within that circle was the man he sought. Widely separated as the patrols were, it was no easy task for anything to escape through the cordon, for the dazzling snow of the plain revealed every living thing for miles.

Even for the fugitive to move at night was difficult at this time, for it was the period of the full moon, and night was almost as clear as day, except for a few hours after sunset. Mack had the greatest faith in his men, and yet this premonition of failure would persist in haunting him. To a man who had never failed it was torture.

"Your turn to watch, Bull," he said. "I'll take over at two o'clock. Keep your eyes westward."

So when the darkness came down Bull mounted

the hill and sat on a blanket to carry out the monotonous nightly vigil. By this time he was quite convinced that the fugitive was either dead or had escaped. Mack's Oriental patience was foreign to Bull's temperament. He was decidedly one of the "up and at 'em" brigade, and loved nothing better than a good fight. He sighed as he rolled a cigarette and stuck it in the corner of his mouth.

"Much of this 'll kill me dead," he muttered.

Two hours passed, and a wonderful moon rolled over the horizon to shed its uninterrupted light on the plain. Bull's keen eyes swept the wide expanse. A solitary house lay between him and the horizon. He and Mack had been there a few days before to find it occupied by a rather wild girl and her sick mother. Both the girl's father and brother had gone into the timber country to make money during the time when farming was impossible. A tiny speck of light came from the shack, and Bull reflected on the girl's life there, far removed from civilisation.

"Poor kid," he muttered. "I guess much of that would drive a fellow to drink."

Then a strange thing happened. He saw a light go swinging across the snow, and a little later came to a halt. The distance made the figure which held it invisible, but from the ensuing movements of the light he came to the conclusion that signals were being sent to some one. He waited until the light

moved across the snow again towards the shack, and then went and aroused Mack.

"What's the matter?"

"I've just seen something suspicious. You remember the shack away back where we looked in?"

"Osgood's place?"

"Yep. Some one hiked out and put up a signal."

"Are you sure?"

"Sartin."

Mack wrinkled his brows. He had had no cause to suspect either the girl or her mother, for he had met Osgood and his son before they went away, and found them to be honest, hard-working folk. Yet Bull was not the man to be mistaken in such a matter, and it confirmed his conclusion that the fugitive was getting aid from some one.

"We'll ride down, Bull." Then, on second thoughts—"No, you'd better stay here. If the fellow is near, we can't afford to leave any open gate."

Bull nodded, and Mack rode off a few minutes later. The shack was a mile and a half distant and built on the northern side of a wide creek, now frozen solid. He kept his eyes open for any movement in the vicinity, but saw nothing. Arriving at the place, he dismounted and knocked on the door. It was opened immediately by a dark-eyed girl of about seventeen, who regarded him with a curious smile.

"Sorry to knock you up so late, Mab," he apologised.

"Gee, it's no trouble. Step right in, sergeant. I thought you was gone days ago."

Mack stepped into the living room, and stood gazing at the poorly-furnished place. His roving glance was arrested by a lantern lying on the side-board. He put out his hand and felt it. It was still warm !

Mack withdrew his hand swiftly as Mab—or Mabel, to give her her full name—entered and gazed at him with questioning eyes. A mop of black hair was gathered loosely into a knot behind her neck, and the short coney coat which she wore had rents all over it. The large eyes were very arrestive, for they carried a strange mixture of ferocity and sweetness.

"Are you wanting something ? " she asked.

"A box of matches, if you've one to spare. Our supply seems to have run out."

She nodded, and produced the matches from a drawer under the table.

"And you hiked all the way back for a box of matches ? "

"Oh, I wasn't far away—only a mile or two. One can't camp in the snow without matches."

Mab pursed her lips, and, reaching for the small saucepan on the stove, poured some hot milk into

an enamel mug. Mack glanced towards the door of the inner room.

"How is she?" he inquired.

"My mother?" a tear gleamed in the dark eyes. "I guess she'll never be well again. I'm scared to-night. I wish my pop was here."

"Is he still up country with Dave?"

"Yep. But he ought never to have gone and left my mother to die."

The small hands closed angrily, and the eyes flashed fire. But the next moment they were soft again. She took the mug of milk and moved towards the door.

"I'll be back in two jiffs."

Mack nodded, and she went into the sick room. While she was away he wandered across to the corner where a photograph of old Osgood hung. He was scanning it interestedly when he noticed that the bottom of it was raised from the wall by an inch or so. He lifted it up to find behind it a smaller photograph. It was that of a young man and across the bottom was written—"Love, Jim." But the thing which caught his eye was a livid scar across the right cheek. He gasped as he realised the importance of this. In every way the photograph answered the description of the man he sought! And the girl had been signalling——!

He took up his original position, and waited for

Mab to appear. She did so at last, with a sad expression in her eyes.

"I guess life's one long string of trouble," she sighed. "Hell, why was I ever born?"

"Is she no better?" queried Mack.

"Nope. I'm glad I sent for the doctor."

"The doctor!"

"Father Jerome. He lives away on the hill yonder. You can't see the shack from here, but he can see us. I arranged to signal to him if he was wanted."

"So you signalled?"

"Yep—half an hour ago. I knew he'd be at home to-night, because I saw him beating back from Yellow Creek this afternoon. It's time he was here."

Mack drew a long breath. Here, indeed, was a logical reason for her action, and yet there was that damning photograph! He resolved to put a question, in the hope that he might learn something from her expression.

"You know why the police are up here, Mab?"

"Sure!"

"You know that to aid and abet a 'wanted' man is a dangerous business?"

"What do you mean?" she gasped.

"Did you ever know a man named Jim—a fellow with a scar on his right cheek?"

She started, but met his glance fearlessly.

"Suppose I do?"

"When did you see him last?"

"That's for you to find out," she said tersely. "For three months you have hunted him as if he was a poisonous snake. Well, find him if you can. It wouldn't be any the worse for me to help him get away than it would for me to help you collar him. This is a fair fight, ain't it?"

"Between him and me."

"Me too," she cut in swiftly. "Because——"

"Because what?"

But she realised that her tongue was wagging too fast and she would not finish the sentence.

"You—you love this fellow, Mab?"

"Suppose I do?"

"Is he worth your love? Remember the charges that are out against him——"

"Lies—lies!" she retorted. "He did rob the bank at Calgary, but he never stole before. He——"

"So you have seen him since then?"

She bit her lip and remained silent. Mack looked at her keenly.

"And it was really to the doctor that you waved—not to this man who lies hidden away out there?"

"I told you the truth," she replied sullenly.

"You do not believe me?"

"I wish I could."

"You saw me signalling?" she hissed. "That was why you came here—not to get matches."

"I never saw you."

"Then it was the other guy—the fellow with a face like a flap-jack, him you call Bull. I guess he's up there waiting to make a capture."

"You're not far wrong. I'm sorry for you, Mab, but this thing has got to go through. It isn't for us to judge this man. He'll get a fair trial when we capture him."

She walked a step nearer him and brandished her clenched fists.

"You'll never get him—never. I know the police are all round and that you've got him in a hole, but you won't get him. For once you are going to fail, Sergeant Mack—and I'm going to beat you."

Mack laughed good-naturedly, but the words sank deep in his brain. It was queer that they should endorse that uncomfortable premonition of failure!

"For your sake, I shall be sorry, Mab," he said.

"Don't think of me—think of yourself. For your sake, I shall be sorry. I know you're only trying to do your duty; so am I. That's where we cry 'quits.' I——"

She swung round as a sound came from outside—a stamping of snow-clogged boots. Then the door opened and an elderly man entered, shook her warmly by the hand, and bowed to Mack.

"This is Father Jerome," said Mab. "I guess you've heered of Sergeant Mack, Father?"

"I should be an ignorant man had I not," laughed the doctor-priest. Then, turning to Mab with a serious face, "You signalled for me?"

Mack, feeling that he might be in the way, bade them good-night and left the place. The conversation with Mab had not lessened his resolution to get his man, but it had the effect of making his duty more onerous, for the girl interested him as few women could. He knew that success from his point of view would mean unending suffering to her. He had no doubt that she was helping the fugitive—probably feeding him, and waiting for some open door through which the man she loved could escape.

"Wal?" hissed Bull, when Mack joined him.

"I saw her, but the signal was to a doctor who lives on the hill yonder. He came while I was there."

"Gee! It must be her mother taken worse."

"Yes, but I learnt something else, Bull. I saw in the shack a photograph of the fellow we are after."

Bull open his eyes wide, and then narrowed them to the merest slits.

"You think she's helping him?"

"She admitted it. It's certain she goes to see him—to take him food. When next she goes, Bull, you will go, too."

Bull nodded, only too pleased to anticipate something less irksome than sitting about all day doing nothing but dream of Regina and a yarn with the

"boys." The chance came sooner than either of them expected. Bull was finishing his watch, when in the moonlit distance he saw a figure leave the shack and make across the snow. Since the priest had left two hours since, he had not the slightest doubt that the black, silhouetted blot in the distance was Mab. He awakened Mack.

"She's gone," he whispered. "I'll have to move quick to get on her trail."

"Off with you. Here, take the big electric torch. If you spot him and want help flash it this way. I'll be watching for it."

Two minutes later Bull went riding away, and Mack, with his mount ready for immediate departure, waited for the issue.

Mack, from his position, could see nothing of Mab, but Bull was in sight, moving carefully across the snow and apparently manœuvring to take advantage of every scrap of cover. Then a cloud obscured the moon and Mack's range of visibility was reduced to a few hundred yards.

The moon came again, and he saw Bull mounting a long slope to the west of his former position. A few minutes later no living thing was in sight. Mack continued to stare fixedly into the distance. Time passed and nothing happened. In the great stillness he calculated he would hear a shot if it was fired. Then he began to have doubts about the torch.

Powerful as it was, its flash might not reach him. He was beginning to get anxious when a tiny point of light appeared—twice. It was followed immediately by a brief message—"Come. I've found him."

Mack sighed with satisfaction, and, mounting his horse, went forward. Soon he found that in order to reach the point from which Bull had signalled it was necessary to leave the beaten track. The horse's feet sank deep into the soft snow, and progress was slow. But at last he saw a black shadow near a belt of pines and recognised Bull.

He reached Bull and the latter pointed to a spot farther along the pine belt. Mack had not Bull's amazing vision and could see nothing.

"There," whispered Bull. "By the broken branch. He's mounted and ready for war. I guess the girl has warned him."

Mack, after prolonged staring, began to make out the form of a mounted man. He was leaning forward as if listening for sounds, and he still wore the broad-brimmed hat.

"I've got him," whispered Mack. "Get round the back of the wood. I'll approach him from this side. Leave your mount."

Bull slipped into the snow, unslung his rifle, and noiselessly disappeared. The vague form under the pines made no movement, and Mack waited until

Bull had had sufficient time to take up a position in the rear. Then he pulled on the reins and the horse moved slowly forward.

Immediately the fugitive went off to the north, making astonishing progress over the treacherous snow. Mack cut across at a tangent, but struck some rough ground and was nearly unsaddled. It permitted his quarry to increase his lead.

" Bull ! " he yelled.

Bull came round the wood in quick time, and, perceiving what was happening, put his horse to it. Over the untrodden snow the race went on. Strive how the two pursuers might, they failed to gain an inch on the man in front.

" I can bring him down from here," gasped Bull.
" Shall I wing him ? "

" No—I want him whole."

" Then we've got some excursion on hand ! "

Bull's remark was justified. At every half-mile one of the three horses went down, but no bones were broken, and the falls were fairly equally distributed. An hour passed, then another. The moon set, and from time to time the man ahead was invisible, but Bull, leaning over his mount's neck, could follow the trail easily.

" He's some rider," muttered Bull. " But we'll get him at sun-up, if not before."

It seemed an eternity before there came a rich

glow in the east, and things began to take shape again. The horses were dead-beat and not fit for another mile of such cruel going.

"There he is," said Mack. "He's entering the wood. He means to cut back, I guess."

"Sure!" agreed Bull, "and that's where we have him hard-boiled. If you'll wait on the fringe I'll round him up on snow-shoes. I guess they're faster than a broncho in that place."

Mack nodded, and Bull, on reaching the outskirts of the wood, tethered his horse to a tree and went forward on foot, while Mack waited outside. Ten minutes passed, and then suddenly from the wood, some two hundred yards from where Mack waited, the horseman appeared. He halted, gave one glance at Mack, and made away.

Away went Mack, too, but a minute later his horse struck a hidden rock and went lame. His quarry turned in the saddle and waved his hand.

"Hold up!" yelled Mack. "Halt, or I fire!"

But it had no effect upon the fugitive, who had now struck a good piece of trail and was making fine headway. Mack decided that the game had gone far enough. He raised his rifle to his shoulder and taking quick aim, fired.

The figure in the saddle swayed for a few seconds and then fell into the snow. Mack plunged forward and dropped by the side of the prone form. One look

at the face brought a cry of amazement from his lips. It was Mab.

"Great Heavens!" he ejaculated. Then, fiercely, "What do you mean by this?"

The eyes opened and stared at him. Then the mouth twitched, as if from pain.

"You got me—in the shoulder. I—I feel so—so sick."

The head drooped and she fainted in his arms. Bull came out of the wood and began to run forward.

"Bandage!" yelled Mack.

Bull brought it, and on seeing the victim, had the shock of his life.

"Suffering rattlesnakes! And she led us that dance. Mack, it means he's got away—escaped!"

But Mack was busy tying up the wounded shoulder.

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They were back in the shack by the creek. Mab was lying on a couch in the living-room and Mack was walking up and down impatiently. Bull had gone to the wood to find the tracks of the vanished man. He entered the shack a few minutes later.

"Well?"

"There ain't a single track but those of last night."

"What!"

"It's true. There are some old marks—a week old or more. Now, ain't that curious?"

Mack wrinkled his brows, and then walked to the door of the inner room and knocked. Getting no reply, he opened it and gazed in. Where the sick woman had been was an empty bed. He came back with a grim laugh to find Mab conscious.

"Where am—— Oh, it's you! I remember now. I'm sorry—I had to do it. But he was my brother."

"But where is he?" queried Bull.

"Gone. You'll never get him now. For over a week I had him here. But I couldn't get him away—you were watching from the hill."

"A week!" gasped Bull. "But we searched——"

"You didn't search the next room thoroughly."

"Didn't I?" retorted Bull. "There wasn't a soul there but your sick mother."

"My mother died the day after. Father Jerome and I buried her——"

She choked, and Bull opened his mouth wide as he realised the truth. He looked at Mack, but Mack had got over his first astonishment and was pondering the next move.

"So he was in that bed all the time!" muttered Bull. "And you led us that chase to open the door to escape. Well, we can get him yet."

"He has six hours' start, and there was a fresh horse waiting for him a mile away. Before you can

reach him he'll be on the train making the border. It was true he robbed that bank, but he wanted the money to save my mother's life. He came too late, but the notes are there, every one of them, in the vase on the mantelshelf."

Mack walked to the place indicated and produced a wad of notes. He counted them, and found they agreed with the sum mentioned by the bank.

"The priest must have known the truth," he said.

"Yes; but I told him under the seal of confession. My brother was wounded and the Father came here last night to dress the wound."

Mack could not repress an exclamation of admiration as he came to realise the skill with which she had worked the whole affair.

"What are we going to do?" queried Bull.

"Nothing. The man will be in America before we can get him. The horses are dead-beat. We shall have to be content with restoring the money."

Mab's eyes gleamed with joy. She sat up and rubbed her shoulder tenderly.

"You darn nearly killed me," she said. "But I guess it was worth it for Jim's sake. He was always wild—like me—and went away two years ago. I wrote him and told him mother was sick and must be got out of the country. That's how it all came about."

"I suppose I ought to arrest you," said Mack.

"No woman has ever made the police look so foolish."

She looked at him with serious eyes.

"I reckon you'd never look foolish. In your heart you're glad it's ended this way. Jim would never have done that but for his mother. Most fellows have a mother somewhere, and would go to hell for her."

Bull gulped, and Mack turned his head away. This girl of the wilderness had the power of touching them deeply. They left her an hour later, when they were assured her wound was of a trivial nature.

"I had a premonition I should fail," said Mack.

"I guess that kind of failure is mighty like success," replied Bull. "Shall I call in the boys?"

Mack nodded, and by evening the scattered troopers were gathered together again and jogging along the trail homeward.

THE BULLY OF SWALLOW FALLS

ON a certain intensely oppressive August night Swallow Falls was enjoying one of its periodical riots. The fighting had started in the gaming room of the well patronised saloon. Like a prairie fire, it spread to the bar, thence to the street, where every man seemed to be engaged in half-murdering his neighbour.

The cause was an exceedingly trivial one—a big American from the Oregon Silver Mine had had his doubts about the deal of a card, and had promptly voiced his opinion. The dealer, as fierce and repulsive a specimen of the human race as ever walked, immediately knocked the doubting man across the room.

Passions ran high at Swallow Falls, and only subsided when so much physical damage was achieved that the stock of sticking-plaster and bandages ran out. The local powder-magazine was Rigger. Rigger did not work at the Oregon Mine—nor for that matter at any other place. It was notorious that Rigger found an easier means of subsistence.

A man of immense stature, he was feared by almost every one in the township, and, like all tyrants, he had managed to gather about him a

pretty little gang of cronies who worshipped physical strength and that kind of bravado which masquerades as courage.

Cody, the American, was the only man who did not fear Rigger, but even Cody knew that in an encounter with the "bully of Swallow Falls" his chance of victory would be small. So individual fighting seldom took place. When trouble broke out Rigger's gang made an assault upon the American community, and being almost equally matched the result was appalling.

Into this disorderly little settlement, when the tumult was at its zenith, rode four members of the N.W.M.P. They might just as well have been a summer zephyr for all the combatants cared. Sergeant Mack, who led the party, halted for a moment to take stock of the situation.

"Talking's no use here," he said. "Ride 'em down, boys. If there's any shooting, mark the man and we'll deal with him."

A low word of command, a yell from the mounted quartette, and the horses went thundering towards the fighting mob. The thick dust rose in a dense cloud, and men flew from the murderous hoofs. A fellow who narrowly escaped annihilation by Mack's mount struck at the rider with a bar of iron. The butt of Mack's rifle caught him in the stomach and he collapsed with a groan.

By the time the police reached the end of the street fighting had almost stopped. The horses were pulled round, and once more the guardians of peace and order swept past the double row of wooden shanties without meeting the slightest opposition.

"That's given 'em something to think about," quoth Bull Hicks, who had the reputation of being the most attenuated member of the corps.

It certainly had, but Mack saw that the happy result was more due to surprise than anything else. Swallow Falls lay off the route patrolled by the police, and many of its citizens had not seen a policeman since Swallow Falls came into existence.

"Don't shout too soon, Bull," advised Mack. "This appears to be a pretty tough crew. There's a fellow yonder with his hand on his gun."

The man referred to was Rigger. The coming of the police had amazed him so much he had forgotten to shoot. Now it was too late. Mack, encouraged by the scowl on Rigger's face, rode his horse close to him and drove him on to the sidewalk.

"Watch your step!" growled Rigger. "Or——"

"Or what?" Mack leaned over from the saddle and stared into the angry face.

"Or maybe you won't like the climate around here."

"We've come to change the climate," said Mack.

"If you've any objection to that you'd better hit the trail right away."

Rigger showed his teeth in a grin of hate. He loathed the police, as all men do who live by questionable methods. Most of all, he hated the man who was now regarding him calmly but firmly.

"Carry on," he said. "Get your Sunday school established. The boys could do with a few Bible lessons."

His followers sniggered, and as the street was practically clear, Mack joined his men and rode back to the camp already fixed just outside the town. It was due to several reports sent down to Regina by the mining company that Mack had been sent to Swallow Falls. Four policemen among a brawny community of some six hundred were certainly inadequate, but the corps had innumerable jobs on hand, and four were the utmost that could be spared.

"There's a crowd of carrion in the town," observed Mack. "And that big ruffian they call Rigger runs the show. We'll have to shoot them out."

"Sure!" agreed Bull. "Nothing easier."

But Mack was of a different opinion. It was obvious to him that Rigger and his friends were living on the spendthrift ways of the miners, and that any attempt to eject them forcibly would result in considerable bloodshed, which at all costs he wished to avoid.

Rigger, on his side, was equally anxious to avoid a real collision with the troopers, for he knew this would prove a suicidal policy. If a policeman was killed the corps was always ready for reprisals. No, the North-West Police was a dangerous institution to run foul of.

"Boys," he confided, "we've got to make that bunch of redcoats look as silly as a cage full of parrots."

"But how?"

"We'll find a way."

While Rigger 'bided his time Mack and his men strove to introduce a little peace into the township. In the daytime things were idyllic, for the majority of the citizens were earning their daily bread in the mine. But after five o'clock they trooped into the town to spend their hard-earned dollars in a manner dear to them. It was then that trouble came, for Rigger's gang was always ready to fling a cheap jibe at the Americans, who had plenty of hot blood in their veins.

One evening while Mack and Bull Hicks were present a more than usually violent argument took place between Cody and Rigger. The upshot was that Cody, driven to desperation, hit Rigger across the face. Rigger uttered a cry like an infuriated lion and advanced on his hated enemy.

"Drop that!" cried Mack.

Rigger glared at him and tossed his revolver on to a table. The crowd rapidly formed a ring around the two men and eagerly awaited the long-delayed combat.

"Better let 'em have it out, sergeant," pleaded a man.

"Sure—give 'em a square deal!"

Mack hesitated, and in the end decided to let the thing go on, but he meant to prevent the quarrel from spreading as it usually did.

The two combatants flung off their coats and shirts and faced each other bare to the waist. Neither of them knew much about boxing, but they fought fiercely and doggedly enough, Rigger towering above Cody by a good four inches. The end was inevitable, for Rigger was much the hardier specimen. From the very beginning he had the smaller man at his mercy. He administered a terrific blow, and sent Cody crashing to the floor. Cody lay on his side for a few seconds, bleeding profusely. But he was game, and with a great effort attempted to rise to his feet. he had no more than risen on one elbow when Rigger hit him viciously in the face.

"Foul!" cried a voice.

Rigger swung round on the man, a rather weedy specimen, who retreated before the blazing eyes.

"Did you say 'foul'?"

"I—I thought——"

Rigger gripped him by the collar and swung him off his feet. But he dropped him the next moment, for Mack had stepped forward and seized him by the shoulder. He turned to stare into Mack's deadly earnest eyes.

"What the——!"

"I say 'foul'—you dirty skunk!"

The whole company drew its breath in tense anticipation. Rigger's brows came down, and he sneered as he gazed at the revolver in Mack's holster.

"Quite a hero with a six-shooter on hand and a red coat to protect you!"

Mack immediately flung off his belt and coat, and, stepping forward, slapped Rigger across the cheek. Bull in the background nearly collapsed with excitement. Never in all his life had he seen Mack act that way. Rigger laughed hoarsely and sized up Mack from his superior height. He saw a man no taller than his last opponent, but deeper in the chest and obviously lighter on his feet. He saw the swell of muscle under the thin shirt and all the signs of vigorous youth—and he felt just a little uncertain.

"I don't want to have you on my conscience," he snarled. "You ain't in my class."

"No, thank God. Put up your hands!"

Rigger could do no other, for Mack promptly landed a left-hander on his jaw. After that the fight really began. Rigger found himself in the position

of a helpless babe. It had been his good fortune always to batter men who had never seen the inside of a gymnasium. He did not know that in the past Mack had won the middleweight Army championship. All he was aware of was that something kept hitting him hard and plenty, and that every second of his time was taken up in vainly striving to stop the next blow.

"Hit him, Rigger—why don't you hit him?"

Urged on by the cry, he rushed at his opponent, and tried to grapple with him. Mack made a lightning movement, swung his body beautifully and his left at the same time. It landed just where it was intended to land. Rigger staggered like a sick man, and then crumpled up and lay still.

Mack walked over to him, surveyed him for half a minute, and then put on his tunic and belt and, inclining his head towards the door, beckoned the speechless Bull outside.

"Better leave him to his thoughts," he murmured.

"Gee!" gasped Bull. "Where did you learn that? For hard kicking you sure got the mule licked. Say, will you give me lessons?"

"You stick to your gun, Bull," responded Mack. "I've an idea you'll need it before long."

The fight in the saloon and the unexpected downfall of Rigger was the talk of the township for the next few days. If Rigger hated Mack before, his

hate was now increased a hundredfold. For a man who prided himself on his strength to be knocked out in a few minutes—— Rigger literally foamed at the mouth whenever Mack's name was mentioned.

His former intention to make the police look foolish now became an obsession. He looked about him for some means to put his threat into practice, and being a quick-witted scoundrel, he found it in due course.

There was a rather pretty but lame girl at Swallow Falls named Ruth Monkton, whose father worked in the mine. Ruth was the only child of Monkton's late marriage, and on the death of her mother had kept house for Monkton. She was at this time scarcely seventeen, and but for her infirmity would have been decidedly attractive.

Ruth served as the nucleus for Rigger's infamous scheme. The more he thought of it the more convinced he became of success. That afternoon found him closeted with the rather nervous girl, who had good reason both to fear and hate him.

"Do you get all that?" he queried.

"Yes—yes, but I can't do it—I can't."

"You can, and you're going to."

She shrank before the cruel eye and shook her head several times.

"I won't. I won't. Why should I play a low game like that?"

"Why? Because if you don't it only wants a word from me to put your father back in Denver gaol "

"You wouldn't dare."

"Wou'ldn't I ?—you'll see."

"But they'd get you too. They couldn't take him and leave you."

Rigger grasped her by the wrists and glared at her threateningly.

"You little fool, do you think I haven't thought that all out. I tell you I can put your father away by speaking two words." He changed his tone to one of cajolery. "What is there in it, after all? It's only a joke that'll make everybody laugh."

"I don't like that sort of joke."

In the end he got his way, for the girl believed him capable of carrying out his threat, and she loved her father, who of late years had changed his habits and was working for her happiness. Nevertheless, the part she had promised to play was hateful to her, and she prayed that something might happen to prevent it taking place.

But on the following morning Rigger came running into the shack. She realised that the moment had come, and her face went pale.

"Now's the time," hissed Rigger. "He's coming into town from the camp—and alone. You can meet him along the road. Hurry!"

Ruth bit her lips, hesitated, and then, taking a stick from a corner, hobbled out. Immediately she had gone Rigger turned the key in the lock of the downstairs room and put it in his pocket. He then produced a small folding camera, and mounting the stairs, propped open the first bedroom door. The sun smote through the window into the bed, providing quite good illumination for his requirements.

There was a second bedroom opposite. He crept into this and shot the bolt in case of accidents. Adjusting the camera, he sat down and waited.

Mack, quite ignorant of the drama that was being staged, rode easily along the trail towards the township. On rounding a bend he saw Ruth hobbling towards him, and recognised her as old Monkton's crippled daughter. He was about to offer her a lift, when she slipped on the glassy road and fell. To his surprise, she lay quite still. Poor Ruth, in the knowledge of the unworthy part she was playing, had fainted at the psychological moment.

He leapt from the horse and ran to her, but her eyes were closed and her face waxen. The shack being in sight, he hitched the horse to a tree, and taking her in his arms carried her to her abode. On reaching it, he tried the downstairs door, but finding it locked, carried her up the steps and into the first room he saw.

She moved as he laid her on the bed and opened

her eyes to stare at him in temporary bewilderment, for his arm was round her shoulder. At that moment Rigger got his photograph !

" It's all right," murmured Mack. " You fell and sprained your ankle or something. Does it hurt much ? "

" Not—not much."

" Come, I'll put a bandage round it."

" No, no ; please go."

The frightened eyes and the scared voice puzzled him. He drew away, and rubbed his chin in perplexity.

" Are you sure you are all right ? "

" Yes," she almost sobbed. " Please—please leave me alone."

" Very well," muttered Mack and quickly made his departure.

He forgot the incident for the rest of the day, but on the following morning he met Monkton going to work.

" I hope your little girl is better," he remarked.

" Better ? Why, she's like she always is."

" I mean her ankle. She had a nasty fall."

" Did she—when ? "

" Yesterday."

Monkton scratched his head.

" She didn't tell me," he said. " Anyway, she's all right this morning."

Mack went back to camp deeply puzzled. Later in the day he strolled with Bull into the town. It was noticeable that he was the object of many sour glances.

"What's wrong with every one this afternoon?" growled Bull. "They look as if they love us like smallpox."

Mack shrugged his shoulders. Just then Rigger lounged up the street. He halted about six paces from the two policemen, and, spitting in the street, deliberately walked on the other side of it.

"Do you see that?" gasped Bull. "Gee, I've a mind to——"

"Leave him alone," said Mack. "We'll get him for something one of these days and take him for keeps."

It was late that evening when Mack had his eyes opened. He was taking a meal at the camp with two other troopers, when Bull came in like a whirlwind.

"What's wrong?" queried Mack.

"Wrong? Look at that—jest look at that!"

Mack took the small object from Bull's fingers. It was a print of Rigger's snapshot. Despite its crudeness, there was no mistaking the persons figuring in it. Mack recognised himself leaning over the prone figure of Ruth. His arm was supporting

her head, and she appeared to be regarding him with horror.

"Where did you get this?" he cried.

"It was nailed to a post in the town. There's half a hundred of them going round."

Mack stood in stony silence for a few seconds. The trick was so outrageous it robbed him of speech. He realised how easy it was to put a vile interpretation on the scene depicted. And Ruth was a mere child—a cripple!

"What do you make of this, Bull?" he asked hoarsely, tapping the print.

"I ain't a darned fool," retorted Bull. "I guess she was sick or something. But what dirty skunk took that picture?"

"That's what I am going to find out."

Two minutes later he was riding furiously down the trail towards the shack where Ruth lived.

Ruth opened the door in response to Mack's resounding knock. He saw her face turn pale as she recognised him.

"Good evening!" she stammered.

"I want a word with you."

She stepped aside, and he walked into the little room. Ruth closed the door and stood regarding him with twitching lips.

"Look at that!"

He thrust the print into her trembling hand. She

gave one glance at it and then uttered a cry of horror and remorse.

"I didn't know," she moaned.

He gripped her by the shoulders and stared into her moist eyes.

"You didn't know? You mean you really hurt your ankle—you really fainted—that it wasn't a dirty trick to——"

"I did faint," she interrupted. "But from shame. I didn't know it would be so horrible to—to deceive you. I thought it was just a joke."

"And you saw no further than that? What made you lock this door?"

"I didn't lock the door. It wasn't locked."

"It was."

"But when I came downstairs the key was in the lock."

"Then who took it away? Who was it who framed this dirty business?"

Ruth shuddered and shook her head. There was only one person capable of such a thing, and Mack knew who it was, but he wanted it from Ruth's own lips.

"You didn't do this of your own free will?"

"No, no. It was hateful. He forced me to do it out of love for my father."

"So Rigger holds some threat over your father?"

"Rigger! Then you know?"

"Yes, I know. But I'm puzzled about you, Ruth. How could Rigger succeed in getting you to play this low part?"

"I'm afraid to tell you. If I told you Rigger might get to know, and then——"

"If you tell me I promise that Rigger shall not harm you or your father. Come, vindicate yourself."

She took encouragement from his smile, and swiftly made the situation clear.

"My father used to lead a bad life. He got mixed up in a cattle raid, and was sent to Denver prison. Two years ago he escaped with Rigger, whose real name is Ganny. My father came home to find my mother dying. When she died he brought me to Swallow Falls in order to evade capture. My mother's death was a great blow to him, and he swore to go straight in future. And he has gone straight—he's been so good to me. We had only been here a few months when Rigger turned up. But Rigger hadn't changed. He has made Swallow Falls not fit to live in ever since. But he never bothered us until a few days ago, when he demanded my help. He swore that if I refused he would give my father away. If my father went back to prison again it would kill him. You—you won't send him away?"

"What you have told me is confidential. So Rigger also escaped from Denver?"

" Yes. He was the ringleader, and was in for a long term."

Mack gave a little grunt of satisfaction ; Rigger had shot his own bolt now. Ruth read his intention in his face.

" You are going to take Rigger ? "

" I am."

" But he will tell on my father out of revenge."

" Have no fear. I promise you that whatever Rigger may say your father shall remain a free man."

Her eyes swam with tears of gratitude.

" How can you be so good after the way I have acted ? "

" I don't see how you could have done otherwise. Now, dry your tears and be happy, for to-morrow Mr. Ganny, alias Rigger, is going on a long and uncomfortable journey."

He left the shack and rode back to the camp, where he got his men to saddle in quick time. Bull, smelling battle, was as excited as a school-boy on holiday.

" Who do we get now ? " he queried.

" Rigger, and any man who obstructs. To-night we are going to bring peace to Swallow Falls."

They entered the township ten minutes later. The saloon was as noisy as a circus—dancing and gambling being in full swing. Everything stopped instantly as the police broke through the outer bar

and into the big room behind. Mack saw his man at the end of a table, with some cards in his hand.

"The philandering sergeant again," sneered Rigger. "Perhaps he's married the girl by this time."

Thereupon Bull broke all orders. He let fly with his revolver, and the cards went flying into the air. Mack saw Rigger's hand go to his belt.

"Drop that, Mr. Ganny!" he yelled.

The name was like an electric shock upon Rigger. His hand halted in mid-air, and he became the object of a hundred eyes.

"I've come to take you back to Denver," said Mack. "You've got another seven years to serve. Maybe I'll overlook the little affair you framed with the aid of a camera and a crippled girl who couldn't help herself. Put up your hands!"

Rigger uttered a cry of rage, but instead of putting up his hands he made a dive for the window. Bull, with his deadly weapon poised in his hand, waited until Rigger was free of the crowd, then he fired as casually as he might have wiped his nose, and Rigger, with a shattered shoulder, fell against the wall. Ten seconds later a pair of handcuffs clicked on his wrists.

"That was good business," said Bull as they rode

towards Regina next morning. "Nobody seemed to have the slightest objection."

"I think they were getting just a little tired of Mr. Rigger," replied Mack.

Rigger, seated on the horse between them, turned his head with a horrible leer.

"Curse you! But I'll put Monkton away, too."

"You overrate your influence, Mr. Ganny," replied Mack. "I have arranged all that quite nicely, thank you."

AN ASTONISHING COUP

“WHAT do you make of it, Mack ? ”

Sergeant Mack stood holding the ten-dollar Canadian bank-note on a level with his nose, gazing at the water-mark critically. He failed to find anything wrong with it, but, nevertheless, it was suspicious. The paper on which it was printed seemed a little different to the genuine Government production.

“ If it’s counterfeit it’s a wonderful imitation,” he mused. “ Where did you get it ? ”

“ In the town,” replied Bull Hicks. “ I went to old Blossom’s place, and he passed it to me. Blossom’s on the level—I guess he took it from some one else.”

Mack gave it back to Bull and pursed his lips. They had been warned from headquarters that an unusual number of spurious notes were in circulation in the district and ordered to try to trace the origin. Johnstown, outside which they were now camping, was a prosperous centre. It boasted well-made streets, shops, a bank, a cinema, and even a newspaper. The latter was the outcome of harnessing the falls on the river for the generating of the electricity to work some machinery connected with mining.

A certain citizen—one Peter Rawlings—saw a chance farther to utilise the power of the water and, taking an old building by the river, instituted therein a printing press. The *Johnstown Herald* appeared first of all monthly, then weekly, and then daily, and Rawlings gained so much kudos from the power of his paper that he was relegated to the proud position of Mayor of Johnstown.

Rawlings was proud of his paper, and used it as a weapon to smite transgressors hip and thigh. He had cleaned up the corrupt practices which had sullied the fair reputation of Johnstown, and was now engaged in calling public attention to the circulation of spurious notes. But even Rawlings' thundering voice did not solve the problem.

The trouble lay in the perfection of the notes. Paper, printing, and watermark, were all so much like the genuine thing that it required a clever man to tell the good from the bad. Bull, in order to satisfy his curiosity, took his particular note to the local bank. The manager, who had that morning refused four of them, fingered it, submitted it to a powerful lens, and shook his head.

"Bad!"

"You don't say so!"

"Yes. The town is swarming with them; so is Calgary and Edmonton. Some of them have reached as far as Toronto."

Bull screwed up his face and put the note back into his pocket. He informed Mack of the bank manager's verdict later.

"I'll drop along and see Blossom," said Mack. "He deals in a small way, and is not likely to handle many notes of this value. Maybe he'll remember who gave him this one. We'll follow it up."

He accordingly dropped in on Blossom and informed him of Bull's "bad egg." Blossom was both amazed and disgusted.

"I've run this little show for ten years," he muttered, "and no fellow's ever said my money wasn't good. I'll have to make it right with Hicks."

"That doesn't matter," said Mack. "What matters is where these things are coming from. Can you remember who gave you the note?"

Blossom thought deeply, and then struck the counter with his fist.

"By gum, I can. It was Johnnie Smale, from Yellowstone. He rode in and bought some nails. I remember I was short of change and had to borrow some from the missus. Yep; it was Smale all right."

Yellowstone was a little settlement some six miles out. Mack rode in that afternoon and found Smale plucking fowls for market.

"I've come to arrest you, Johnnie," he said.

"Eh!"

"You passed a bad note to Blossom a few day ago."

"A bad note! That couldn't have been no bad note. The bank oughter know a bad note when it sees one."

"What bank?"

"Regina. I got some money lying at Regina. I went down last week and drew some. That's where I got the note."

"Are you sure?"

"Sartin! Say, you don't think I'd knowingly plant a bad note on a fellow?"

He was so upset at the bare idea that he nearly wept. Mack, who knew him to be as honest as daylight, quickly reassured him, and went back to Johnstown. Just outside the town he met Rawlings in a large car. He touched his cap, and Rawlings pulled up.

"Say, sergeant, have you got any further with this forging business?"

"Not yet."

"Well, it's high time something was done. I've lost eighty dollars to-day over the damned things. Who planted them on me I can't remember. It's a disgrace to the town, and we've got to put a stop to it. I've got an article here for the *Herald* that'll stir up the authorities."

"They're stirred up already," said Mack. "It's not easy to trace these things. They may come from the other end of Canada."

"I know," grunted Rawlings testily. "But I feel a kind of responsibility here. A lot of poor people have been robbed. It's bad—bad!"

He shook his head from side to side, and went rolling down the dusty road. When the article which he had mentioned appeared in the *Herald* Mack frowned as he read it, for it was nothing else than an attack on the police, accusing them of dilatory methods and general slackness.

"This thing is getting on his nerves," he remarked.

"It's sure getting on my nerves, too," said Bull.
"I've been let down for twenty dollars."

The difficulty lay in knowing where to start the repressive campaign. Mack realised that the notes might have been manufactured abroad and brought into the country. Every likely avenue explored brought him up against a brick wall.

Grace Rawlings, the pretty daughter of the Mayor of Johnstown, was convinced that the notes came in from the United States. She poured into Bull's ear the most amazing theories, but Bull was more susceptible to the girl than to her wild theories.

"We'll round 'em up one of these days," he asserted. "Mack has got a way of putting his hand on things when least expected."

"Well, I wish he would hurry up. He won't listen to a word I say. I told him about the man

I saw on the road with a large trunk on his back. I am sure it was full of notes."

Bull let loose a low cackle which annoyed Grace so much that she rode away with her nose in the air. Bull sighed as he looked after her, for Bull's heart was much softer than his body.

During the next few weeks there seemed to be a diminution in the circulation of the forged notes. Now and again a solitary one turned up, but these appeared to be old ones that had passed through many unsuspecting hands.

One evening Bull came into camp to find Mack sitting reflectively before a copy of a Winnipeg paper, which he had just purchased in the town. Bull, who knew Mack's ways extremely well, scented news.

"Bull, I'm going down to Winnipeg at once."

"Ha!" ejaculated Bull. "So that's it!"

"What do you mean?"

"You got something on your mind, I guess?"

Mack nodded and, taking up the paper, read out a small advertisement around which he had put a pencil mark:

Wanted.—Engineer to overhaul lithographic machinery.—Apply A. Y., 36 Maine Street, Calgary."

"Well?" said Bull.

"It seems a little strange that a man with a

lithographic press should advertise so far away as Winnipeg for an engineer."

"Maybe he's had a breakdown."

"Of course, but there is usually a man on the spot capable of dealing with it. If not, they would certainly send to the makers, or the makers' agent. Moreover, there is only one lithographic printer in Calgary, and he doesn't live on Maine Street."

Bull scratched his head. He was not good at this kind of reasoning, and was not quite clear at what Mack was driving.

"Where do you come in, anyway?" he asked.

"I'm going to apply for the job."

"But what do you know about that kind of thing?"

"Scarcely anything. But perhaps I shall learn a few things."

"But Winnipeg's not on our patrol."

"There's no time to get permission from headquarters. I'm going to take the risk. You hang on here and don't let any one know I'm gone."

Bull agreed, and Mack at once made his plans for departure. There were nine chances that it would prove a wild-goose chase, but the tenth chance attracted him. To have written in reply to the advertisement from that neighbourhood would, he felt, be inadvisable. A Winnipeg address would ward off any possible suspicion.

That night found him on the train steaming eastward.

Immediately on arriving in Winnipeg Mack posted his letter and prepared to wait several days before he got a reply. To his astonishment, he heard within twenty-four hours. A letter arrived at the boarding-house at which he stayed, asking him to call upon a Mr. Emmanuel at the Carlton Hotel at ten o'clock next morning. The letter was postmarked "Winnipeg," and it was obvious that Mr. Emmanuel had been in communication with Calgary over the wire.

Mack filled in the remainder of the evening in removing his short moustache and in adding a few touches to his suit, in order to fill the rôle of an out-of-work engineer.

At ten o'clock he presented himself at the Carlton Hotel, and waited in the lounge whilst a porter took in his name. A few minutes later he was escorted to the third floor and shown into a private sitting-room. A slim man in a grey suit rose from a chair and nodded.

"Mr. Davidson?"

"Yes," replied Mack. "You asked me to call this morning."

"Yes. I was on the point of leaving when my partner wired me and asked me to see you. He has had a breakdown, and can't get it repaired on the spot. You have had a lot of experience?"

"Ten years."

"Are you acquainted with the Williamson machine?"

"Perfectly. What is wrong with it?"

To Mack's immense relief, Emmanuel did not know. It saved a tremendous amount of embarrassment on Mack's part, for he had not the slightest idea of the working of the machine. Moreover, it added fuel to his suspicions, for if Emmanuel was a partner in a genuine lithographic printing establishment, surely he would have some idea of the cause of the breakdown!

"Well, it doesn't matter," drawled Mack. "I guess I can get the thing running in a day or two."

Emmanuel asked a few more questions concerning Mack's experience, and Mack, now knowing that his questioner knew even less than he did himself, was not at a loss for ready replies.

"It is important that I go to Calgary this evening," said Emmanuel. "I should like you to accompany me."

"I'll be ready. Where shall I meet you?"

"Here, at five o'clock."

Mack turned up on the minute, and he and Emmanuel took the train back to Calgary. Throughout the journey they talked very little. It was at the end of it that Emmanuel mentioned a matter which had evidently been on his mind for some time.

"I forgot to mention a condition."

Mack stared at him.

"It is desirable for certain private reasons that you should not know the location of our works."

"It's all the same to me," replied Mack easily.

"You mean——"

"That you will consent to be blindfolded on the journey there. Perhaps I should have mentioned that before."

"But how do I get back when I've done the job?"

"I'll drive you back."

"Very well," agreed Mack. "My fee will be higher accordingly."

"You shall be well paid."

At Calgary Emmanuel made the excuse that he was not yet ready to start for the works, but would call for Mack at the Station Hotel at eight o'clock in the evening. Mack made himself quite agreeable, and filled up the intervening time by taking a meal. More than ever he was convinced that he was on the trail of the counterfeiter, and he was anxious that no false step should spoil the denouement.

At eight o'clock Emmanuel turned up with a big motor-car and a chauffeur. He took the seat beside Mack, and instructed the driver to proceed. It was dark before they got clear of the town. At the junction of several roads the car pulled up, and Emmanuel produced a large black scarf.

"Have you any objection?" he laughed.

"Not if it is necessary."

"I am afraid it is."

Mack submitted to the bandage being tied securely over his eyes, but before his vision was stopped he made a mental note of the mileage recorded on the speedometer—a little thing which Emmanuel had apparently overlooked!

The car started again, and Mack composed himself for a doze. The speed increased until the car was moving at a tremendous rate. An hour passed, and still the engine maintained its steady hum

"Is it much farther?" he asked.

"Some little distance," replied Emmanuel evasively.

The "little distance" took over two hours to cover. At last he felt the speed decrease, and then the brakes applied. The car came to a dead stop, and Emmanuel uttered a little sigh.

"Are we there?"

"Yes. I must ask you to remain blindfolded a little longer."

"All right."

He was helped out of the car and led forward for a distance of fifty yards or so.

"Steps!" warned his guide.

Mack counted them—six—as he mounted. For a few seconds he trod on a hard floor, and then

descended twenty-five steps, turned a corner, and entered another room. The bandage was taken from his eyes, and he found himself in a low-ceilinged room lighted with electric lamps and containing no window of any kind. Ventilation was provided by means of a chute, which came through the ceiling. On one side of the room was a bench fitted with a lathe, and a quantity of tools lay near it. On the opposite side was the machine—a squat affair connected with a belt to some overhead machinery.

“Dynamo driven?” queried Mack.

“Yes; the dynamo is upstairs.”

Mack leaned over the machine, and with an inspection lamp commenced to examine the mechanism. After a few minutes he nodded his head satisfactorily.

“I think I can fix this in an hour or two.”

“Good. I will leave you to it. Push the bell if you want the dynamo started. Push twice if you want me.”

Mack nodded as he threw off his coat and grabbed a big spanner. Emmanuel went out and closed the door behind him. Mack waited a few minutes, and then crept across to the door. He turned the handle and pulled, but it was locked from outside.

He went to the chute and looked up it, but it was too small to permit exit that way. As he stood there a droning noise came down it. At first he thought it was the dynamo, but after listening intently he

recognised it as the rushing of water—a big booming sound that meant falls!

What was wrong with the machine he did not know and did not care. The more important thing was to discover whether it was the instrument which had fabricated those ubiquitous notes. But there was no sign of a lithographic stone, which in itself was suspicious. He searched the litter on the bench and found nothing to satisfy him.

At last success came. A corner of the bench had been cleaned down with a wad of paper, and the oil-soaked improvised swab lay in the corner. Mack unfolded it and recognised the fine-quality paper. He thrust it into the pocket of his coat and then started to put the machine permanently out of action. He knew enough about mechanics to accomplish this in quick time. Extricating the part which he had broken he rang the bell—twice.

After a short wait Emmanuel entered with another man—a short, stout person, whom Mack had seen somewhere before, but could not think where.

“ Well ? ”

“ I’ve traced the trouble,” said Mack with a grin. “ But it can’t be repaired here. This piece will have to be replaced by the makers.”

“ But they are in England.”

“ Well, you can probably get a new piece cast at a good foundry.”

The little man nodded as he took it from Mack, and then whispered something to Emmanuel. The latter reflected for a moment, and inclined his head.

"Now that you have traced the trouble we think we can fix it ourselves, Mr. Davidson, when we get the new piece cast."

"It's simple enough. I can't think why you didn't find it yourselves."

"I had a look," replied the little man, "but I never noticed this break."

"Then I gather that's all I can do?"

"I think so. Now, about the cost of your time?"

"I leave it to you," replied Mack. "I was hoping it would be a long job."

"We'll pay as if it was," laughed Emmanuel and, producing a wallet from his pocket, handed Mack two hundred dollars.

"Now I'll drive you back," he said, and produced the black handkerchief significantly.

Mack put on his coat and permitted his eyes to be bandaged again. He reflected that it would be better to postpone the coup until he had located the place on the map and could bring Bull with him. A false step now might result in the destruction of the evidence he required—the lithographic stones from which the notes were printed.

The long journey back was accomplished without incident. Once in the streets of Calgary, Emmanuel

removed the handkerchief from Mack's eyes. Mack at once looked at the speedometer. Since starting it had registered 224 miles—112 miles each way!

As there was no train to Johnstown until the morning, Mack spent the night in the hotel. Before going to sleep he got a large scale map of Canada and perused it carefully. Measuring off 112 miles on the scale, he stuck a pin through a piece of string and described an arc with Calgary as the central point. It was then he made a discovery of some importance. The only place on the river at that distance was Johnstown!

It was clear now that Emmanuel had chosen Calgary as the jumping-off place to allay any possible suspicion. Mack remembered the sound of the falls and gasped at the significance of it. Near the falls was the printing office of the *Johnstown Herald*, and Rawlings—— He laughed grimly as he realised certain facts.

The next day he made Johnstown and, donning his uniform, hunted up Bull. He found that worthy talking with Grace Rawlings. The girl made a mock salute as she saw Mack.

" Good-evening, sergeant ! "

" Good-evening," he replied seriously.

" I haven't seen you in the town lately."

" I've had business to attend to."

" Oh, do tell me, have you traced the forger ? "

Then she gasped as she noticed that his moustache was gone.

"So that's why you looked different——!"

Mack turned away a little abruptly and beckoned to Bull. He feared that the girl might drop a casual remark to her father. Rawlings was not without intelligence, and might draw certain conclusions from Mack's absence and his altered appearance.

"Well?" queried Bull.

"I've got them. We're going after them at once."

"Where?"

"Here, in Johnstown."

"Gee! Where are they hid?"

"We'll soon find out. I want to corroborate certain things first. Come, we'll ride over to the *Herald* office."

"You don't say——!"

"We shall soon know positively."

They arrived near the big building in very few minutes. The upper room was blazing with light, for the *Herald* was in course of printing. Mack led the way round the building, and in the rear saw six stone steps leading to a door. Then he turned his horse and searched the ground in the neighbourhood. At last he found what he sought—the marks of a well-known make of tyre on the soft road.

"Good!" he muttered. "I wonder if Rawlings is on the premises?"

"I know he ain't," replied Bull. "I saw his car going to his house when you turned up. But is Rawlings in this?"

"Very much so."

"But he's the Mayor! Gosh! this'll create some stir."

Mack was quite indifferent to that. He dismounted and examined his revolver, while Bull did likewise. They made for the steps and mounted them, to find the door locked. Mack rapped on it with the butt of the revolver, and after waiting a few minutes a noise was heard from inside.

"Who is it?" came a voice through the letter-box.

"Some one from Mr. Rawlings."

Immediately the bolt was drawn and the door opened.

Mack and Bull slipped inside. Bull levelled a revolver at the head of the startled keeper of the door.

"Lead the way downstairs," said Mack. "And don't make a noise."

The scared man obeyed, and Mack found himself in the passage which led to the room where he had seen the machine.

"Is any one in there?" he demanded.

"Yes—Roberts."

"Is he the short stout man with a bald head?"

The man nodded, and Mack went forward. Roberts was working at the bench, and turned as the door opened.

"Put up your hands, Mr. Roberts!" cried Mack.

"Eh!"

"Quick! And walk this way."

Roberts came forward and stared at Mack with trembling lips.

"Why, you're—you're the——"

"I am. I've no time to waste. Show me where the stones are stored."

"The—stones!"

"From which the counterfeit notes are printed."

Roberts saw the game was up, and, like a wise man, accepted his ignominious position. He led the way along the passage and, producing a key from his pocket, opened a strong iron door. Mack switched on the light and saw a dozen small lithographic stones lying on a bench. One look at them was sufficient to prove everything up to the hilt.

"So this is where Rawlings really makes his money, eh? The *Herald* is a red herring drawn across the trail?"

Roberts nodded miserably.

"And what does Mr. Emmanuel do?"

"He plants the stuff."

"And the staff upstairs?"

"They know nothing."

"Only you four in it, eh?"

"Yes. This man and I worked the machine. I got little enough out of it. I wanted to stop it long ago."

"I reckon you'll stop it now all right," growled Bull. "Where's the other bird—Emmanuel?"

"On his way here."

The store-room seemed so admirably adapted for a prison that Mack bundled the two men inside and turned the key in the lock.

"You stand by, Bull. When Emmanuel turns up, pitch him in with the others. I'm going after Rawlings."

Rawlings was taken in the middle of dinner. Grace and her mother were so obviously innocent that Mack's sympathy went out to them in their terrible situation.

Rawlings at the last broke down and confessed that he was driven to it by pressing creditors. He had employed a clever German artist in the first difficult task of making copies of the notes, and had himself manufactured the special paper, having been connected with a paper mill for many years.

By the irony of coincidence, the *Herald* contained a strong article on the subject of the forged notes next morning, whilst the town rang with the news of Mack's astonishing coup.

THE CARTON CASE

THE Carton case was one that had baffled and aggravated the N.W.M.P. for the better part of the summer. Ralph Carton was known by all and sundry to be a ne'er-do-well, and few men could be found who had a good word to say for him. How he managed to live nobody knew, but lots of people had shrewd suspicions that he trod the crooked path.

In appearance Carton was lean and angular. In an affray with some "breeds" two years before he had lost an eye, and now covered the vacant space with a black eye-shade. But it happened to be his left eye, and did not affect his shooting—which was a pity. It was, indeed, alleged that his one remaining optic was as good as most men's two.

For the past year there had been a long series of robberies and hold-ups, and suspicion fell upon Carton. But how to bring it home to him was the problem. When the news went round that Sergeant Mack was out on the war-path the consensus of opinion was that Carton's game was up.

And one evening Mack got his man, not actually on the scene of the robbery, but so near to it that there was no doubt left in Mack's mind. Carton did not attempt to escape. He handed his gun over to

Mack, and was taken all the way to Regina. Carton's pockets were found to be bulging with money, but he swore it was his own, and there was no proof forthcoming to the contrary. Then when the case was going against him, Carton coolly produced an alibi, in the person of a clergyman known and respected by all and sundry.

It was proved to almost every one's satisfaction that at the time of the robbery Carton was riding in the padre's company at least four miles from the burgled place. There was not the slightest doubt in the matter, and Carton was acquitted.

Mack chafed under the humiliation. He rode across to the victim—a small trader—and interrogated him. The trader was vehement.

"Do you think I'm blind? I saw the fellow getting out of the window, and let fly at him. The moonlight was on his face, and it was Carton—one eye and all."

"But we have the padre's word."

"I know—that's the hitch. Could the padre have been mistaken? Maybe his watch stopped."

"If his watch had stopped, he would have known. He swore he hadn't altered the hands for over a week. It was only two minutes out by Regina time."

The trader scratched his head and swore. Nothing would shake his conviction that the robber was

Carton. Mack went away and rounded up Bull Hicks.

"How long did he get?" asked Bull.

"He's acquitted."

"What!"

"Yes. He proved an alibi."

"Well, I'm—— Gee, that fellow's slick. I guess he roped in some lying tinhorn to swear——"

"You're wrong, Bull. It was the padre from Sweetwater. When the robbery took place he was riding with Carton four miles away."

Bull looked as nettled as his comrade. He had quite reckoned the Carton case as finished. Now to hear that the fellow was free and doubtless laughing at them!

"He'll do it again," he mused. "He's that sort of fool. Next time we'll get him for keeps."

"I hope so," replied Mack. "But even Carton has brains. He'll work wider afield."

Mack was proved to be right. For a month there were no more robberies. Carton had gone away. Then came news of a big hold-up—a stage-coach running between two isolated townships. The robber had worn a mask for this big event, but the description of him fitted Carton down to the ground.

"This is the frosty limit!" growled Bull. "We'll need reinforcements for this job. Why didn't nobody shoot him?"

"Nobody had a gun. Nothing like that has ever happened before in that district. I expect every one is bristling with firearms—now it is too late."

"Well, and now what are we going to do?"

"Watch Carton—never let him move without being under observation. We'll run over and see if he's back yet."

They rode to the shack which Carton occupied and found him busily engaged in digging up his cabbage patch. He turned his single flaming eye on Mack.

"When are you going to leave me alone?"

"When you're in gaol," replied Mack. "You made a nice haul this last time."

"Steady!" growled Carton. "There's such a thing as defamation of character. Once before you made yourself look darned silly. Watch your step."

"Watch your own," drawled Bull. "I've heered say you're the slickest man on the draw in these parts. One of these days I'm going to show you a slicker."

Carton showed his teeth in a smile of contempt. His very attitude proved his guilt. Indeed, he was proud of it, and reckoned he could best the police every time. It was this conceit which Mack calculated would be his undoing in the end.

"Let's get along, Bull," he said. "We're interrupting honest toil."

"I was getting an idea that was what they paid you for," sneered Carton.

Mack made no response but rode away with Bull. They halted in the woods above the shack.

"If he did that hold-up away back he got home in record time," mused Bull. "I know a thing or two about riding, and I reckon it's all twelve hours from Horse's Neck to here. He must have done it in ten."

"He's got the fastest horse in Canada," replied Mack, "and he drives it without mercy."

They sat and discussed the business for some time. The chief trouble was that they were short of men at the moment. Carton had them at a tremendous disadvantage. Now that the police had made one big mistake, he knew that they would be wary in future and not attempt to make an arrest on suspicion. To get Carton he must needs be caught in the act, or in possession of stolen money which could be identified.

"You'll have to stay here, Bull. I'll take on the patrol while you watch Carton. If he leaves the shack get on his trail. Do your sleeping in the daytime for it's the darkness that appeals to him."

"When are you coming back?"

"Every two days. I'll make the wood from the northern side, so that he shan't see me."

Bull nodded. He reckoned the vigil was going to

be a long one, for surely Carton would have sufficient funds from his last haul to maintain him for a considerable period.

"Do you want him alive?" asked Bull.

"I don't mind. But a dead man is better than none at all."

Bull appreciated the remark. Carton's wonderful horse might outpace him, but he reckoned it would take something more than horseflesh to outpace a rifle bullet, and Bull's eyesight was almost as good at night as in the daylight.

So while Mack patrolled the neighbourhood, Bull sat close in the wood and watched the shack like a lynx. Carton spent the first two days inside his abode, and Bull began to wonder if he had committed suicide. When Mack turned up Bull had a face as long as a fiddle.

"Ain't seen a sign of him. He's inside all right, because his fire is going."

"Well, stick to it," said Mack. "It may take weeks, but we'll get him in the end."

"Weeks!" gasped Bull. "Why, I'll sure die of melancholia."

On the next evening Carton went for a ride, and Bull went too. His objective was a small township four miles distant. Bull saw him enter the saloon, and waited patiently for something to happen, but nothing did happen. Through the windows Bull

saw him drinking and talking. At one o'clock in the morning Bull trailed him back to his shack. The same thing happened the next day, and the next. It was a good thing there were no ears to take in all Bull said as he made for his lonely camp.

It was a fortnight since the hold-up had taken place. Bull was still playing his monotonous game of watchful waiting, and Mack was still prowling about in the hope that Carton would "come out."

One evening luck swung right in his favour. He was making his way towards Bull's camp, when he saw a horseman in the distance. He at once made for a belt of trees and used his binoculars. Despite the distance, he succeeded in identifying Carton. It wanted but an hour to sunset, and the nearest town was Sweetwater—ten miles north. That Carton was making for Sweetwater was fairly evident, but whether his designs were honest or otherwise remained to be seen.

Mack waited until Carton had passed him, and stared into the distance for some sign of Bull. But Bull did not put in an appearance, and he was ultimately driven to the conclusion that Carton had left the shack unseen. This was extremely disappointing, for his horse was not too fresh. Nevertheless, it was an opportunity that could not be missed. He put his mount after the other horse.

The sun went down and darkness set in. Mack

spurred on his horse in order to get closer to his quarry. He soon drew near, for Carton was jogging along at a slow pace. But when the few scattered lights of Sweetwater came to view Carton turned abruptly left, and put his horse to a gallop. Mack had not expected this move, and almost lost him in the darkness. It was only when his horse struck its feet on a partly-made road that Mack got an inkling of Carton's intentions.

He remembered that there was a stage-coach running between Endicott and Sweetwater, and that it was due to arrive at the latter place about this time. For what other reason could Carton have in making this particular spot than that of highway robbery? Mack's heart beat excitedly as he took to the grass with a view to muffling the sound of the horse's hoofs.

But Carton was not in sight, nor could he hear a single sound of him. To have lost him after so long a ride was extremely annoying. Mack urged his tired beast forward. A minute or two later he heard in the distance the rumble of wheels.

"The coach!" he muttered.

Then the sound ceased suddenly. There was a long interval of silence, followed by a single shot. Round the bend in the road came a point of light some five hundred yards away. He drew his revolver and rode towards it. Now he could see the

mounted figure moving about the coach, evidently collecting his toll. He was within fifty yards when Carton finished his work. Waving his revolver, he bade a mocking farewell to his victims and galloped down the road.

“Halt !”

Mack drove right across the road to intercept him, but the highwayman performed a wonderful feat of horsemanship. Quick as a kite, he turned his horse behind Mack's obstructive mount, and almost slid off the animal's body to escape Mack's bullet. But he was not completely successful. The bullet struck him in the shoulder, and he groaned as he passed.

Mack put after him immediately. His horse, tired as it was, responded to the whisper in its ear, but Carton vanished and was lost in the night. Mack swore under his breath, and gave up the chase for the moment, knowing the uselessness of matching his exhausted beast against such a one as Carton rode.

He headed for the stationary coach, and arrived there to find driver and passengers heaping imprecations upon the head of the robber. One man was having a wounded arm bandaged and swearing all the time.

“Another second and I'd have plugged him. Gee, he was quick ! Why, here's the police sergeant.”

All eyes were turned to Mack.

"He's gone," said a man. "Didn't you see him?"

"I saw him," growled Mack, "and got him with a bullet. But my horse is worn out. I'm going into Sweetwater to get a fresh one. Have you lost anything?"

A groan went up from the party. They had lost everything they had possessed—money, watches, rings. The only man who had possessed a gun was the one who had drawn it with such painful results.

"You saw him?" queried Mack.

"Yep—a fellow with one eye. It's the same man that held up the other coach. We ought to have been ready for him."

Mack, anxious not to lose any time, rode as hard as he dared into Sweetwater. There he bedded down his mount and borrowed a fast animal. He had no doubt that Carton would make his shack at full speed, but thought there was a good chance of overhauling him before he reached it.

But he was doomed to disappointment. Throughout the long journey he neither heard nor saw the impudent outlaw. Dead tired, he arrived near the shack and saw a light burning within. Before entering he rode into the wood, and found Bull sitting tight.

"Hello!" welcomed Bull. "I thought you was never coming."

" I ran into Carton. There's been another hold-up. How did he manage to evade you ? "

" Say, what's this ? "

" Carton has made a pretty haul near Sweetwater. I saw him going there, and followed him——"

" Impossible ! "

" What do you mean ? "

" I'll swear he has never left the shack this day."

" Nonsense! I saw him with my own eyes, and I've winged him. He must have got back but a few minutes ago."

" I tell you no man has left or entered that place, at anyrate, since two o'clock," replied Bull stubbornly.

Mack was deeply puzzled, for Bull was not the man to swear a thing unless he was certain. On the other hand, Mack had seen him with his own eyes.

" Bull, we'll prove this at once."

" Sure. If you winged him he can't hide that. Let's go across."

Leaving the horses in the wood, they walked over to the shack and knocked on the door, entering without waiting for an invitation. Carton was sitting in a chair smoking and reading a newspaper. His coat was off and he looked as cool as a cucumber.

" What's all this ? " he snarled.

" Take off your jumper ! " ordered Mack.

" Eh ! "

"Take it off, and be quick about it."

"Are you mad?"

"If you don't do as you are told in two minutes——"

Carton sighed, and slipped the jumper over his head.

"Now your shirt."

"Well," he sneered, "I allus reckoned you was loco; now I know. Is this a medical examination?"

Nevertheless he did as he was bid, and stood before Mack bare from the waist upwards and absolutely unscathed. Mack bit his lip.

"All right!" he muttered.

"You're sure you're through? I'll take my trousers off if you say the word."

Without a word the two baffled men went out. Then Mack remembered something else and wandered behind the shack, where a rough stable was erected. The door boasted a padlock, but the key was in it. He turned it and looked inside, flashing an electric torch. A horse was lying on some dirty straw.

"Is that it?" asked Bull.

"Yes. I could swear it."

"But it's fresh. That mount ain't been used for four hours at least."

From the condition of the horse that appeared to be so, and yet—— The whole thing was clothed in

mystery. Mack spent the night in the wood with Bull, and two more disgruntled men never lived !

It was a month later that the mystery was solved, and it came about by the merest accident. Mack was riding through some wooded country a few miles from Carton's abode, when he heard a loud cry from near at hand. He pulled up his horse and listened intently. A sound like moaning came from the undergrowth.

He leapt from his horse and made in the direction of the cries. In a few minutes he came upon an open space, and in the centre of it a half-caste was wrestling with a steel trap, which had closed over his ankle. Mack ran to him and, exerting all his strength, set the man free. He then examined the injury, but found it to be slight.

"You'll do," he said with a smile. "You ought to have kept to the main track. These woods are full of traps."

The man nodded gratefully, and then began to look about him as if searching for something.

"What are you looking for?" asked Mack.

"Lose leetle piece paper."

Mack's keen eyes saw the object under a bush, where it had presumably blown whilst the half-caste was wrestling with the trap. It had become unfolded, and a few words of writing were facing

upwards. He stooped and picked it up and could not help reading the words :

“ Aurora Post to-night, nine o'clock.—Jim.”

Affecting unconcern, he handed the message to the half-caste, who stuck it into his belt.

“ Going far ? ” asked Mack.

“ Not very far. I take message to a man.”

“ But there isn't a shack within ten miles.”

“ Yes—one not five miles away—near little creek.”

“ Oh, that one ! ” said Mack. “ I clean forgot that. You'd better take care of your leg.”

The half-caste grinned and, saluting, limped away. Mack thanked the fates for this fortunate incident. The note could have reference only to one place, The Aurora Trading Post, an isolated store some eight miles distant. The brevity of the message made it clear that Carton had already laid his plans. It looked as if the unknown Jim was a kind of paid spy, who apprised him when the opportunity for a haul was favourable.

He permitted the letter-carrier to get a good way ahead, and then, making a detour, set off to find Bull, who should be in the neighbourhood of Carton's shack. Bull was there sure enough, thoroughly miserable from the long weeks of fruitless watching. He greeted Mack as a man at the North Pole might

greet another wanderer. Some of his misery disappeared.

"Any luck?"

"The best in the world. I picked up a message for Carton. I believe he is going to raid the Aurora Post to-night."

"Gee, that's news!"

"Listen, Bull! There must be no mistake this time. I am beating it for the Aurora in a few minutes. I'll warn Kenyon, and get him to mark his money. If by any chance I miss getting Carton, you can get him when he comes back. Collar him before he can plant the cash."

"I sure will."

"But I hope to get him my end. If I do I ought to be back here by eleven o'clock."

Bull nodded, and his eyes gleamed as he saw an end of the thankless job of watchful waiting. From the shelter of the trees they saw the half-caste enter the shack with his message. Mack set his mouth grimly and made immediately for the Aurora.

Kenyon, the elderly man who ran the place, gave him a warm welcome, and gasped when Mack informed him of the object of his visit.

"That's queer," he mused. "There's been a fellow hanging round here for some time past. I did a little business with him only this morning."

"The man who sent the message! What was he like?"

Kenyon gave him a rather vague description but he was an unsuspecting sort of man and had paid but scant attention to the stranger.

"Well, it doesn't matter much," said Mack. "It's Carton I want at the moment."

They discussed the matter for the next hour or two. Kenyon kept his available cash in a tin box in the sitting-room behind the store. At Mack's request he fetched it, and together they marked every coin and note. Then Kenyon put it back where it was always kept—in a drawer under the dresser. The drawer was visible from the counter of the store-room, and Mack concluded that the unknown Jim had already apprised Carton of its position.

"It's ten to one he'll enter the store quite casually and hold you up when you go to the counter," said Mack. "In which case it will be better for me to remain here—behind the door. Has that window got shutters?"

"Yes."

"Then close them."

Kenyon obeyed, and the two sat and waited for the arrival of the robber. On the stroke of nine he came. The store was empty, and he rapped on the counter. Kenyon walked out, leaving the door of the inner room open—with Mack behind it.

"Good-evening!" he said pleasantly.

The next instant a six-shooter was levelled at his head.

"Hands up!"

"What the——!"

"Hands up, and walk backwards."

Kenyon obeyed, and Carton followed him up closely. Driving the storekeeper into a corner, Carton went straight to the drawer where the cash was kept. It was then Mack acted. He leapt at Carton, preferring to take him unwounded.

But Carton had seen his reflection in a small mirror opposite. He darted sideways, and fired rapidly. Mack saw two plates shattered to pieces, and immediately returned the fire. His bullet caught Carton in the breast. He clutched the place with his hand and staggered sideways. The next instant he was disarmed, and Mack clipped the handcuffs over his wrists.

"Got you this time, Carton," he muttered.
"You'll need a lot of alibis to get clear after this."

Carton's single optic flashed hate at his captor. Mack attended to the wound, and found it was not of a serious nature. He borrowed some linen from the grateful Kenyon and made a rough bandage.

After giving the outlaw a drink of brandy Mack put him on the horse in front of him and rode to apprise Bull of the good news.

"When I've landed you in gaol I'm going to find your accomplice, Carton," he said.

Carton merely laughed contemptuously, and for the rest of the journey no word passed between them. Arriving at the shack, he left Carton on the horse, after hitching the animal to a railing, and went inside. Bull was sitting in a chair serenely smoking. He grinned as he saw Mack, and pointed to the door opposite.

"I got him in there as harmless as any babe. Gee, but he got back here in quick time! How did you miss him?"

"Miss him! Bull, are you drunk?"

"Drunk? Not on your life. I was sitting in here when he——"

"Bull, this is nonsense. You can't have him, because I've got him outside."

"What!"

"Come and look."

Bull went out, and almost collapsed when, in the moonlight, he saw Carton's sinister face.

"Why, I had him—— Come inside!" he stammered.

Mack followed him, and when he had turned the key in the lock stepped into the inner room. To his amazement he saw Carton's absolute double roped securely to the trestle bed.

"Darn me, if there ain't two of them!" gasped Bull.

"Twins."

"By gosh, they're like two peas, even down to the eye shade."

Mack stepped forward and removed the shade from the face of the helpless man. Under it was a perfectly good eye.

"That's how Carton got his alibi," said Mack. "They took it in turn to commit the robberies, the other man always being in a position to prove an alibi. I guess this is Jim Carton, and that he was playing faro or having supper with the padre on the stroke of nine o'clock this evening.

And that is exactly what the evidence proved. When Jim Carton was examined he bore a scar on his shoulder made by Mack's earlier bullet. To make the deception complete, Jim had owned a horse the exact counterpart of his brother's. When they were both sentenced to long terms Mack and Bull breathed a sigh of relief, as did hundreds of other people in the district.

YELLOW JACK

THE man who carried the mail from Regina to Saskatoon cracked his whip over the shaggy bodies of his six "huskies" and peered into the encompassing blackness. It was somewhere near mid-day, but more like midnight, for masses of blue-black cloud hid the sun, and a storm was raging on the heights to the north.

Dan Godfrey, the postman, knew from experience that in an hour or so the storm which had broken over the mountains would sweep over the snowy plain and make life a veritable purgatory. For that reason he was hustling his dogs to make a sheltering ravine ere the demon of the North-West caught him in its toils.

It was round about Christmas, and the mail was particularly bulky. In addition to several bags of letters, he carried innumerable parcels and packages. All the way from Regina he had struggled to keep to schedule time, but found the going hard, and had already lost a whole day. Now the coming storm threatened to hold him up again.

Long before the ravine hove into sight the storm broke about him. An icy wind swept over the plain, and the snow came almost horizontally—small,

blinding particles that stung the few inches of exposed flesh and reduced visibility to a few yards' range.

But Dan was as hard as a piece of steel, and nothing short of the ravine would satisfy him that day. Another hour found him coated with an inch of encrusted snow and icicles inches long hanging from his cap, and still the ravine was four miles away.

Through the awe-inspiring gloom he glided like some spectre of the snows, cracking the whip, bellowing to the fierce animals he drove. At last the camping place was reached and Dan halted the team. He unharnessed the dogs, flung some frozen fish on to the snow, and, taking a hatchet, made for the pine trees to cut his fuel.

It was then he discovered that the ravine was inhabited. A small tent was pitched under the shelter of the pines, and a fire was blazing outside. Near it half a dozen dogs were clearing up the remains of a meal, and a vague figure was moving in the distance.

"Hello, there!"

The figure turned and came towards the fire, its arms full of logs. Dan recognised the winter busby and coat of the N.W.M.P., and then laughed joyfully as he called to mind the face under the cap.

"Burn me, if it ain't Sergeant Mack!"

"Hello, Dan. This is a fine sort of night to run across you. Beating up with the mail?"

"Sure! Gee, it's good to see another fellow these times. I was just pitching my tent."

"Don't trouble," said Mack. "Turn in with me. We'll have a bite of food together."

This suited Dan very well. He liked and admired this notorious sergeant of the police, whose name was as well known on that trail as that of the President of the United States was. But it surprised him to find Mack out so late in the season—and by himself.

"Got something on, I guess?" he remarked.

"Yes—Yellow Jack."

"Yellow Jack!" Dan whistled. "You don't say that fellow's around again?"

"He is."

"And you're after him?"

"Yes. Bull and I came down from Saskatoon a month back."

"What, Bull Hicks! Is he here?"

Mack shook his head, and his eyes hardened. Bull, his constant companion, was now lying in hospital with a bullet in his body. Yellow Jack had put it there.

"Bull's lying up. We met Yellow Jack, and Bull got in the way of a bullet."

"So! That's bad!"

" Bull will pull round all right. It takes more than one bullet to kill a fellow like that."

For the rest of the evening they sat round the fire talking of many things, from railway trains to brass tacks. Outside the ravine the wind was howling like ten thousand demons, but the rock sheltered them from its murderous edge.

" What's Yellow Jack gone and done now ? " asked Dan after a long silence.

" Raided Silver Bow, killed three Indians, and abducted the daughter of the fellow who runs the store at Chilcote."

Dan whistled as he listened to the latest list of charges against the lawless half-breed.

" What's he want with Chilcote's girl ? " he asked. " He ain't the sort of wolf that has much interest in women."

" Spite ! " informed Mack. " Chilcote winged him a month back. After the raid at Silver Bow he ran into Nora Chilcote on the trail, and took her away with his gang. It was just after that that Bull and I went after him. We found him unexpectedly, but he saw us first, and got Bull. I lost days in getting Bull into hospital."

" And now ? "

" Now I'm going to find him again."

" By yourself ? "

Mack nodded easily. He saw nothing extraordinary

in this. Yellow Jack was the only man that counted for anything. His crew of wretched cronies were like babes without their leader.

"Wal, if I happen to meet him," drawled Dan, "I ain't starting no conferences. No, sir, I'll sure drill him at sight."

"Do," advised Mack. "It will save a lot of trouble."

They banked up the fire a little later, and, after a last pipe, retired into the tent to slip into the thick sleeping bags which alone made camping possible under such conditions. All night the storm raged, but drew away shortly before six o'clock in the morning. It was Mack's waking hour, and winter and summer found him out almost to the minute. Dan, with equal punctuality, was already out of his bag and dragging on his boots.

"She's blown herself out," he said. "I guess it'll be darned hard going after this fall. Gee! the fire's nearly out!"

He ran outside to feed the smouldering fire and the hungry dogs. Mack heard a low curse, and the next moment Dan rushed into the tent with tense face.

"Holy smoke—it's gone!"

"What has gone?"

"The mail."

Mack's brow came down. The mail was quite an

important affair, but on this occasion more important than Mack was aware of.

"It's hell!" growled Dan. "It ain't only the letters—there's a sack of money for the Silver Bow Mine. Ten thousand dollars in notes."

Mack accompanied him to the almost empty sled. The robbers had been aided by the storm, for not a single track remained. All was buried under a foot of new snow.

"It's Yellow Jack," whispered Dan. "I'll stake my life on it. I remember now—away back I caught a glimpse of a dog-team. That swine must have known what I had aboard, and waited for me. Mack, I'm going to get him if it takes me ten years. It's the first time I've lost the mail since I carried it."

"We'll get him between us," said Mack quietly. "Will the teams run together?"

"I guess."

"Then we'll harness both teams to the bigger sled and leave the other one here. You've got a gun?"

"You bet."

"Good! At the most he can't be more than twelve miles away. But we'll have to get him quick, or he'll plant the money. And there's the girl, too, to be considered."

"Sure. Oh, Mister Yellow Jack, how I'm itching to get a bead on you!"

They made away from the ravine in the first roseate blush of the dawn. Mack's idea was to select all the higher ground in the hope that the arch-criminal might be sighted against the snow, or at least his smoke seen.

In an old disused trading store situated along a creek not far from the scene of his last haul Yellow Jack sat before a bag of letters, coolly slitting them open with a knife and enjoying the contents immensely. Some of them contained paper money, which he extracted and placed in an empty cigar-box on the table beside him.

He was two parts Indian and one part Spanish, and his face was hideously pock-marked. In stature he was well-proportioned, and he wore the most polyglot attire ever seen. He took a pride in his armament, and his belt was lined with knives and other weapons. Mixed with quite a pronounced streak of madness was considerable cunning. His coups were well planned, and he carried them out with a dash and daring worthy of a better cause.

Like a general, he planted outposts north, south, east, and west, and was informed well in advance of any approaching danger. The rest of his confederates were at this moment engaged in drinking and gambling in the next room. They were the scum of

Canada, picked up here and there by the wily half-breed, and kept in subjection by a most ferocious discipline.

While Yellow Jack was still engaged in reading other men's correspondence a quarrel broke out in the next room. A shot rang out, and a man groaned. Yellow Jack cursed, flung the door open, and stood surveying the snarling crowd and the man on the floor who was holding his calf.

"You make no more fight, or I shoot whole damn lot," he growled. "You take food to girl, eh?"

The man responsible for this stammered an excuse. His lord and master immediately kicked him and silenced him effectively.

"Everything you forget—big fool! Bring me the food, and I will take it. Hurry!"

He slammed the door behind him and went out to continue his hunt for money. A few minutes later the kicked man came in with some canned fruit and a mug of hot milk on a tray. Yellow Jack took it and mounted the stairs behind the stove. Arriving at the landing above, he knocked on the fast door, turned the key and entered.

A dark girl of about eighteen was sitting on a box by the window. She rose as he entered and crouched back, as if she feared some assault. But Yellow Jack showed his teeth in what was intended to be a bewitching smile.

"No be afraid," he muttered. "Bring you food—yes."

"Put it on the table and leave me alone."

Yellow Jack did as he was bid. Since taking Nora away he had changed his intentions. His object had been to wreak his spite on her father for the wound he had inflicted. He had meant to shave every scrap of hair from the beautiful head, and send Nora home to the parent who literally worshipped her. But something had stirred within his savage bosom—something quite new to him. On beholding her at his leisure he found himself held spellbound. The fear in her soft eyes had merely enhanced their appeal. Yellow Jack became human in one respect—he fell in love. Nor was his love of a vicious character. Ruffian, murderer, and plunderer as he was, this new thing that had taken possession of him was clean.

"Always you speak hard to me," he said. "I treat you very well. I give you anything you want, yes."

"Then give me my freedom," she replied. "Why do you keep me in this dreadful cold place? I have done nothing to you. One day the police will find me, and then you will regret it."

"If police find you, then we both die. Never before I see a woman like you. Once I read a beautiful poem 'about a woman. I t'ink it all lies—no woman could be like that one. And then I see you and I know——"

"Stop!" she wailed. "I would rather you beat me than say such things."

"No beat you," he muttered. "Never hurt you. For you I give up everything. I turn honest—go church maybe, if you—if you——"

She divined the sense of the unfinished sentence, and it filled her with loathing. Despite her intensely feminine nature, she possessed unlimited courage, and would have killed herself rather than listen for an instant to her captor's infamous proposal.

"Please go away," she implored. "My head aches—I feel ill."

Yellow Jack gave her a searching look, and, with an unintelligible remark, went out. She drew in her breath with a little hiss as the door closed behind him. In all her life no man had made love to her, and now to gain her first experience from such a person as Yellow Jack!

Yet his behaviour puzzled her deeply. She knew she was utterly at his mercy, and had expected to be molested long before this, in view of which expectancy she had hidden a knife in her dress. Now, however, she was brought to the painful conclusion that her captor really loved her and was insane enough to hope that she would return his affection.

It opened up a new possibility, and for a brief moment she had actually contemplated using the newly-found weapon. But her soul revolted against

using her beauty in this way. Her idea had been to encourage him in his advances, to submit to a marriage at the nearest settlement, and then to betray him. No, that was impossible.

She was gazing through the window after having eaten the unpalatable food when she saw in the distance a solitary figure. It stood for a moment on the brow of a hill and then vanished into the trees. It occurred to her that it might be her father, who was unquestionably searching for her, and her heart beat fast as she realised the danger which he ran—if he was alone.

For an hour her eyes were fixed on the distant hill, but she saw nothing more. The day passed, and the night came down. Driven to desperation, she decided to put into practice the one possible means of escape. From the window to the ground was a distance of twenty feet. Hitherto the snow beneath had been beaten hard, and jumping was out of the question. Now the new snow provided a natural mattress. To travel across the snow-bound country at night with the thermometer at forty below zero was repellent enough, but there was always the chance of finding an isolated shack, or perhaps the man she had seen on the hill.

She wrapped her coat closely around her, and, taking a blanket from the floor, began to fasten it about her shoulders, for she knew the danger of

exposure in such a climate. She went to the window and opened it. To her amazement a figure was swarming up the side of the house. The head was no more than six feet from the window.

"Oh!" she ejaculated.

"S—sh!"

She held her breath, and watched the mittened hands finding projections which would afford assistance. The skill with which the climber ascended was proof enough that it was not her father. When at last the fingers gripped the window ledge and the face came into the light, she saw a complete stranger—a policeman. He climbed over the sill and stood in silence for a second or two listening intently.

"Who—who are you?" she gasped.

"My name's Mack. How many men are there downstairs?"

"Eleven or twelve."

"And Yellow Jack—is he there?"

"Yes."

"Good!"

He produced a small coil of rope from his pocket, and, throwing one end out of the window, looked for some heavy object to which to fasten the other end. But, apart from a table and a chair, the room was bare.

"I'll have to pull him up," he grunted.

"Who?"

"Another fellow." He put his head out of the window and uttered a little hiss. From out of the darkness came Dan's vague form. He found the end of the rope, and, fashioning a loop, hung on to it. Mack put his feet against the wall and pulled. A minute later Dan's big figure came through the window.

"Why, it's Dan!" exclaimed Nora.

"Sure it is," muttered Dan. "Are you all right, kid?"

"Yes. I was just going to jump when——"

Mack put his finger to his lips as there came the sound of an opening door, followed by footsteps on the stairs. Waving Dan to one side of the door, he took the other side. There was a knock on the door, and then it opened and a figure entered bearing a tray. Mack descended on it, and his strong fingers found a grip on the man's throat. Dan, seeing the tray falling, made a great effort to save it, but failed. It hit the floor with a crash. Mack, still holding his struggling, suffocating prisoner, turned his head towards Dan.

"Get the girl out of the window. She can make the trees and wait for us."

Dan understood, and whispered rapidly to Nora. She was averse to leaving, but he almost pushed her towards the window, and, helping her out of it, clung on to the rope while she made *terra firma*.

"The wood!" he whispered. "You'll find our dogs."

He turned to see Mack hurl the now senseless man into the corner and collar a second ruffian, who came through the door. But the second man was merely the vanguard of half a dozen. Dan uttered a whoop and drew his revolver. Crack! A man on the point of putting paid to Mack's account collapsed with a groan. Mack disposed of his second adversary by flinging him at the oncoming party. Then suddenly the light went out.

"Damn!" muttered Dan.

There was no time to relight the candle. Mack and Dan found themselves engaged in terrific combat in inky darkness. A cry for help brought more men up the stairs. They fell upon their enemies and friends alike. Curses rent the air, and once Mack's revolver spoke. After that firing became impossible.

The valiant Dan found himself flattened out on the floor with three men on his chest. From the cursing near at hand he imagined that Mack was in a similar predicament, but was punishing his attackers.

The assumption proved false a few seconds later, for a bright ray of light came from a corner of the room and threw into clear relief the struggling groups on the floor. Behind the light stood Mack with a six-shooter levelled.

"Stand up!" he roared.

Dan, finding the pressure removed, leapt to his feet and brandished his revolver. The crowd, thoroughly cowed, backed against the wall. Mack flashed the light over their faces, but failed to find Yellow Jack.

"Light the candle, Dan."

Dan was doing so when a curious thing happened. A long flame leaped across the window and a hideous crackling was heard. Smoke began to penetrate through the cracks in the floor.

"Fire!"

There was little doubt about it. The building was well alight, and the dry wood was going up like fireworks. A hole appeared in the floor near the window, and a red flame leaped to the ceiling. Mack made for the door and turned the handle—it was bolted from the outside. He turned to the scared men.

"Escape if you can. It's Yellow Jack I want!"

Exit by the window was impossible, so Mack and Dan attacked the bolted door with their feet. It went down at last, but before any one could move the floor gave way, and the whole party was precipitated into the furnace below. Mack pulled his cap over his eyes, and, swinging a chair, smashed the window frame to atoms. The inrush of air made breathing easier, but everything was burning, and men were

scrambling across the wreckage, some with their clothes ablaze.

“Mack!”

The voice came from the far corner. Mack looked and saw Dan pinned under a beam. He went to him and succeeded in removing the timber, but Dan had had a bad fall, and could not rise. Mack picked him up and, burned and half-suffocated, fought his way to the door. . . . Two minutes later he was outside on the snow. He put Dan down and turned to the half-dozen men who had managed to escape.

“Any one else in there?”

“Three or four.”

He made his way to the door, but was driven back by the heat.

“Come away!” called Dan. “You can’t live a minute inside there. Anyway, they ain’t worth it.”

Mack was scarcely of that opinion, but he was bound to accept the first part of the remark, for the upper part of the building collapsed the next moment, and he was forced to beat a hasty retreat. He knelt down by the side of Dan.

“What’s wrong?”

“I’ve broken my leg. Say, what about those fellows?”

“I don’t want ’em. They’d be in my way. Yellow Jack is good enough for me. He must have locked the door and set the place on fire.”

"Sure! They always said he was crazy."

The little batch of desperadoes seemed overwhelmed by the catastrophe and so worried with their burns that they made no attempt to escape. Mack walked up to them.

"I advise you fellows to beat it, and start all over again—on the level. It looks as if your leader hadn't much love for you."

A growl of hate went up, and the party prepared to hit the trail for the nearest settlement. Mack went back to Dan.

"I'll get you back to the sled. Your leg will want putting in splints."

"You can't carry me," muttered Dan. "I'm all of two hundred pounds."

But Mack had hoisted him over his shoulder in ten seconds, and with slow steps made for where the sled was hidden. He arrived among the trees, but saw no dogs nor sled. Instead there were tracks made by the runners leading in a northerly direction, and in the snow the unmistakable marks of a struggle. Dan took in the situation at a glance.

"He's got her," he hissed. "And he's mad—stark, raving mad."

"We ought to have got him first," said Mack. "This is serious."

"Leave me," pleaded Dan. "There's a shack a mile to the west. I guess I can hop there."

Mack shook his head. Perilous as Nora's position might be, Dan came first. Left alone in the cold with a broken leg, Dan would surely die. He produced a knife, and, cutting two straight sticks, bound up Dan's limb as well as possible. Then he hoisted him again over his shoulder and made for the shack which Dan had mentioned.

It took an hour to reach it, but, fortunately, its owner was in and was only too glad to do what he could for the disabled man. Dan was put to bed and made more or less comfortable, but the loss of the mail was a great blow to him, and he could think of little else.

"Beaten by a skunk like that!" he muttered. "What can I tell the boys yonder? Everything gone—the money too."

"Maybe we'll save the money," said Mack. "I'll have to leave you now, Dan."

"Where are you going?"

"After Yellow Jack. I'll find the other sled and manhandle it. There is plenty of food and it's light."

"But wait until to-morrow."

"It may snow again, and I might lose him for ever."

The beautiful dawn found Mack with his head down to it pushing the sled along the two clear-cut tracks made by Yellow Jack. Whither he was

making Mack could not guess, but he knew that if the desperado was to be overhauled, sleep must be forgone.

How many days he could go without sleep he did not know, but he determined that he would not close his eyes until he dropped. His meal times occupied no more than a few minutes. The thing he dreaded was snow. But all days the sky remained clear. A township was passed. Yellow Jack was taking no risks in that direction !

Mack thought of Nora, and the more his mind dwelt on her the deeper his determination grew. For a few minutes only he had seen her, but that had been enough to implant in him an almost religious regard for her welfare. The soft, deep innocent eyes, the blush of healthy youth, the tremulous bosom, were things not easily forgotten. And she was scarcely eighteen—a mere wondering maiden, in the grip of a semi-lunatic !

Night brought no sign of the refugee. Still Mack tramped on, defying fatigue. He found the place where his quarry had camped, and in the snow close to it a handkerchief frozen into the semblance of tin-foil. He knew the meaning of that. It had been drenched with Nora's tears !

Like an automaton, his cast-iron form moved through the starlit night, with the runner tracks ever before him. Then in the chilly dawn he made a

startling discovery. A horse and man lay dead in the snow, and both bore fatal wounds. The man he recognised, and it brought from his lips a growl of deepest rage. It was Chilcote, Nora's father !

She had probably seen this fell deed done. He could envisage the cruel scene—Yellow Jack kneeling in the snow with his—Mack's—own rifle. And the girl, horror-stricken, petrified, watching the pursuing horseman being picked off—— !

Then came a sight which put new energy into his body. Away over the sparkling snow he saw a long dog-team. He could count the animals—twelve !

“ At last ! ” he muttered.

Across the dazzling white plain the chase went on. The pursuer—Sergeant Mack—had no eyes for anything but the moving string of dogs, and no thought for anything but the capture of the man who drove them. The exhaustion which had threatened to overwhelm him was gone now. An unnatural energy pulsed through his body.

Looking ahead, he could see Yellow Jack clearly, but there was no sign of Nora. Either she was bound to the sled or was unconscious. The passing of an hour revealed the fact that the dogs were drawing away. He strove to quicken his pace, but the sled moved badly in the loose, soft snow. Seizing two tins of meat, he thrust them into his pockets, and

making sure that his belt was full of ammunition, he abandoned the sled.

Then for the first time his quarry turned his head and saw the solitary figure on snowshoes moving swiftly in his rear. What his feelings were Mack neither knew nor cared. One thing was clear—that within a few hours he would overtake his man. The country ahead rose in one great sweep—a slow and gruelling incline that would bring the dog-team to a mere crawl.

Yellow Jack drew away until the foot of the incline was reached; then Mack saw the denouement dawning. Inch by inch, yard by yard, he gained ground. The burning sunshine drew great beads of perspiration from his face and neck, but he maintained his steady pace notwithstanding.

He was within a mile now, and still the gradient was upward, culminating in thick timber. He reckoned to overhaul Yellow Jack before he reached the crest. The intervening distance was decreasing at every minute. He saw the dog-musher raise the whip and crack it over the animals' heads, but it made no difference.

Only five hundred yards now! The team suddenly stopped, and Yellow Jack turned in his tracks with a rifle in his hands. At five hundred yards a man on the snow was not an impossible target, and Mack dropped flat as a bullet whistled through the thin

air. He rose again and took an oblique course. Two more shots rang out, but they missed by a good distance.

"Getting scared," muttered Mack.

The next instant a figure jumped into view from the sled and started to run. It was Nora, who had either escaped from her bonds or gained consciousness. Yellow Jack turned his head and saw her. He overtook her in twenty enormous strides, and brought her struggling to the sled, holding her while he got the dogs into action again.

Mack moved forward at increased speed. What puzzled him was Yellow Jack's objective. So far as he knew there was no habitation within ten miles. Why was the outlaw taking this unbeaten trail?

It was a few minutes later that the truth was made clear. On the south side of the wood above appeared a number of brown tents and dark figures. It was an Indian encampment, not a "reservation" common to the district, but a temporary settlement. Yellow Jack was making straight for it.

It caused Mack to reflect. He remembered Yellow Jack's history and parentage. He was only one step removed from the pure Indian—and that step not a great one. If this encampment was his real objective, as it seemed to be, it meant that he was certain of a warm reception there.

It was a bitter pill to have to swallow after the

strenuous pursuit. That he would meet with stubborn hostility Mack had no doubt. Nevertheless he continued to mount the slope, and in ten minutes reached the fringe of the camp. There he was met by three Indians, two of whom carried rifles. The foremost man addressed him in the Cree tongue, which Mack knew well.

"White man no enter camp."

"I don't wish to so long as I get what I want."

"What white man want?"

"The man who came just now—him called Yellow Jack. Also the white girl that he has stolen."

The Indian shook his head several times.

"No steal white maiden. She his squaw."

"He lies," said Mack angrily. "Listen, it is a breach of the law for any one to shelter a man wanted by the police. It is foolish to work against the police."

The Indian drew himself up, and his dark eyes flashed. "The Crees do not lie among themselves. The father of the man who came was my father's brother. Him you call Yellow Jack comes to rejoin the tribe, and where a Cree goes his squaw goes too."

Mack shook his head impatiently. To think that any one could take the word of Yellow Jack! Yet this Indian either did so or was playing a deep game. Mack remembered the stolen wad of notes, and wondered whether they had helped in any way.

"You are foolish," he said. "I will wait yonder by the pines until sunset. If the man and the woman are not given up the police will track you down and punish you."

The Indian made no reply, and Mack, realising the futility of attempting to force his way through, went to the place indicated and partook of food. That the Indians would not now deliver up Yellow Jack was certain, but Mack had no intention of beating all the way back to Saskatoon and leaving the tribe to vanish into the vastness of the North-West.

After eating, he managed to snatch a few hours' sleep, risking any desperate act on the part of Yellow Jack; but that worthy was presumably quite satisfied with his present sanctuary, and Mack awoke to find the sun very low down in the west.

He reflected on the situation, and came to the conclusion that Nora must be rescued at once if the peril which threatened her was to be averted. He had no doubt that Yellow Jack would persuade the tribe to march on the morrow, and after that intervention would be difficult. Yellow Jack might be crazy, but he certainly was not bereft of cunning. To pass off Nora as his wife was quite a strategical move, for while he spoke the Cree tongue fluently, Nora doubtless knew not a word of it, and all her protestations in English would be wasted.

Feeling certain that he would be watched from

the camp, he waited until the sun set, and then pretended to carry out his threat and go for assistance. Once out of sight, he stopped and made a wide detour with the object of approaching the camp again from a different direction.

In an hour he found himself on the north side of the wood. Through the trees came the glow of camp fires, and now and then guttural speech. Step by step he moved closer.

Nora sat on a pile of skins in the corner of a big tepee, her brain stupefied with the fate that had overtaken her. When Mack had climbed into the room of the old store she had believed that freedom was at hand. Despite the odds against them, she had had no doubt that Mack and the stalwart Dan would get the better of their craven adversaries, and she waited by the sled, expecting them to arrive any moment with the scoundrelly Yellow Jack.

Hearing the crunch of feet in the snow, she had run from the trees, only to behold, to her horror, the villainous features of Yellow Jack. There was no surprise on his face, for he had seen her making towards the wood, and after starting the fire had followed her.

She had tried to escape, but was caught in a few moments, and despite her frantic struggles was

thrown on to the sled and lashed there with some rope which it contained.

After that escape was out of the question. All his former sickening regard for her seemed to have vanished. He was like a man in the grip of madness. He drove the dogs mercilessly and laughed crazily from time to time. For four hours they moved through the darkness, and then stopped at a suitable camping place.

She remembered the knife which she carried, and determined to use it at the first opportunity, but no opportunity came, for Yellow Jack was taking no more risks with his prisoner, and kept her arms bound even after he had removed her from the sled. He had tried to spoon-feed her, but she had refused the food.

"Eat or you die," he muttered.

"I'd rather die—you brute!"

But he did not intend her to die, and after rigging up the tent carried her into it and placed her on some blankets, covering her with a big bearskin. Early in the morning they were away again, always taking the lone trail to some destination known only to himself.

Then came the incident of the horseman. She had turned her head sufficiently to witness that fell deed, and it made her sick with horror. It was only when Mack hove into sight that she contrived to get her

hands free and to find the knife. Yellow Jack had fired thrice before she could cut the remaining bonds and leap from the sled. She had seen Mack and recognised him, but had been caught and violently disarmed before she could do anything.

Now, here she was in a worse predicament than ever. She had attempted to plead with the Indians, but if they understood anything of her speech they were evidently not disposed to help her. She wondered what had happened to Mack. Surely he would not desert her ! But a little reflection convinced her that Mack could do nothing against a tribe of armed Crees, who were obviously on the best terms with her abductor.

While she sat and beat her hands in vain to devise some means of escape, Yellow Jack entered. He approached to within a yard of her and sat down on his haunches, Indian fashion, ogling her with his inflamed eyes.

"So I beat the policeman, after all," he mused. "He go away now. You never see him again."

She remained silent, closing and unclosing her hands in her great fear.

"You treat me very badly," he said. "I bring you here safely, and you tried to kill me. Yes."

"I would kill you now if I had a weapon," she cried.

"Yes, to-day ; but not to-morrow. To-morrow

we be married—Indian marriage—and then no man try take you away. My father him sachem of this tribe years ago. Always I mean to come back to it. Now I live with my brothers till I die. See, I have much money. I make you good presents——”

“Stop!” she almost screamed. “Do you think I would marry a thing like you? I would rather be killed or tortured——”

“You speak foolish,” he said calmly. “You cannot help be married. After that it will be easy. You will not mind.”

“Never—never! The police will find me and take me away. They will punish this tribe, and you they will hang.”

“Always you speak foolish,” he replied. “Tomorrow me go towards the great frost. Up where the lights flash there are great rivers and mountains. The Indian moves so fast—so fast.” He surveyed her beautiful terrified face. “You are like the moon in the month of strawberries. Your eyes are like the frost that sparkles in the snow. For you I become Indian again——”

She put her hands to her ears, for this talk was worse than physical torture. Yet the man was sincere enough. Despite his murderous disposition, he loved to madness, and he wanted her as a wife. But for the things she knew about him, the things she had seen with her own eyes, she might have pitied

him, instead of detesting him as one does a snake or any other loathsome reptile.

"I leave you," he said. "To-morrow there will be dancing and feasting——"

"Go—go!"

He seemed quite incapable of understanding her resentment, for his egoism was unbounded. With an injured expression he rose and left her to herself. She could see the glow of the camp fires and the statue-like figures squatting about. Near the door was an aged woman pounding something in an earthenware dish and droning some kind of a song.

She tried to lift the bottom of the tent, but found it as tight as a board. Moreover, it was banked with snow outside. She wished she had the knife now. Any kind of weapon would have been comforting.

The long evening passed, and one by one the shadowy forms vanished into tents. The old woman who had been busily occupied outside was evidently a sort of guard, for she came in a little later and commenced to make herself cosy near the exit.

Nora tried to go to sleep, but on the verge of oblivion was awakened by the snores of the old woman or by the scratching of some animal outside. When the snorer at last held her peace the scratching near the bottom of the tent still continued. She turned from side to side half in sleep and half in consciousness. A wick in a bowl of oil illuminated

the tent, throwing queer shadows on the canvas.

"S—sh!"

She started at the faint hiss and looked at the place from which it appeared to come. She nearly screamed at the sight that met her eyes. The bottom of the tent had been forced up and a man's shoulders were between it and the ground. Vivid and unmistakable in the yellow light was the tense face of Sergeant Mack!

He put one finger to his lips and noiselessly withdrew his shoulders, holding up the canvas with his hands to reveal the way of escape. She glanced at the sleeping woman and moved her body towards the opening. A minute later she stood in the snow outside with Mack's firm hand grasping hers.

It was only then that she realised the hazards of the exploit. The tepee was literally surrounded with tents. To reach her Mack had had to worm his way between them, risking detection at every other second. Also it was clear that in order to escape he must run the gauntlet again with her. That he played with death she knew full well, for a revolver was clutched in his right hand and his expression was hard. He put his lips close to her ear.

"Not a word. Tread in my tracks!"

She nodded, and smiled at him bravely. How easy it was to be courageous with such a man as this to lead! Mack took the shortest cut to the woods, but

even so he was compelled to pass three tents. . . . Two of them were passed. The passage lay between the third and a camp fire.

Step by step they moved forward. To Nora it seemed an eternity before they were abreast of the fire. Her beating heart sounded so loud that she could not understand why it did not awaken the whole camp. Then came an unexpected calamity. A man suddenly arose from beside the fire and stretched himself. Mack halted, and stood like a statue, but the keen eyes had seen him. A loud cry went echoing through the camp, and the dark figure hurled itself forward. Mack refrained from using the revolver and met the attack with his foot. The man gurgled and collapsed, the keen knife falling from his fingers.

“Come!” cried Mack.

Nora needed no urging. She ran as she had never run before, but still Mack was not satisfied. He put out his hand and grasped her. She felt herself jerked forward at an alarming rate. They reached the shadow of the trees, and Mack shot off to the right. The timber thickened and darkness closed them in. But still they went forward, Nora gasping for breath and wondering that any man could see an inch before him. Once Mack stopped and listened, only to move on again hastily.

“They are following,” he said, “and they have

eyes like wolves. We must get out of the wood before they surround it."

Twice she fell and hurt her foot, but no complaint left her lips. All her heart went out in inexpressible gratitude to this man. Whatever happened now she did not care. The adventure, serious as it was, had its thrills. In the darkness she looked into his face, but could see nothing. She contented herself with the slightest pressure of the strong fingers that enclosed her soft hand.

At last the timber thinned, and from the barren snow beyond the reflection of the moon's beams filtered through the trees. Mack halted on the fringe of the open expanse, and looked in either direction.

"We seem to be here first," he whispered. "Away yonder is broken country, where I can put up a fight if necessary. The snow is deep. You had better have the snowshoes."

He slipped them from his back, and, stooping, fixed them to her feet. They moved forward, Mack going in up to his knees from time to time. Hearing a cry behind, he looked round, and saw half a dozen figures emerge from the trees away to the right.

"They've seen us," he remarked, and immediately stepped behind her to cover her body with his own. But no shot was fired by the pursuers. Evidently Yellow Jack had given instructions that his prospective bride must be taken uninjured.

"How far is the place you mentioned?" asked Nora.

"A mile or so. Are you tired?"

"No."

"Good. Make for the bright star yonder."

Through the bitterly cold night the chase went on. Good as their progress was, the Crees were quicker. Mack realised it was going to be a race with time, for the nearest of their pursuers were no more than five hundred yards away.

"You go on," he whispered. "I can hold them up for a bit."

"No."

"Why not?"

"If once I leave you they will begin to shoot. It is me they are afraid of hitting."

Argument was useless. She was determined to have her own way, and she got it.

"Very well," grumbled Mack. "It's obvious you haven't learnt discipline."

"Perhaps not," she returned softly. "But I have learned something else."

She did not say exactly what she had learned, and Mack could not help wondering what it was. So intent was he on the subject that he almost forgot their perilous position. When he turned his head again the leading Indian was within two hundred yards, and the others were close behind.

"Faster!" he urged. "Look—there is the place. There is a kind of cavern in the rock——"

Crack! A bullet whistled by his head.

"Come closer," pleaded Nora. "You will be hit."

Mack grasped her hand again, and together they swept up the incline, on the brow of which was an outcrop of rock. Fifty yards to the left was a long fissure, big enough to permit the entrance of a human body. Nora made for this, and wedged herself through. Mack followed a second later. He swung round immediately he was inside and fired the revolver.

"Got him!"

The other members of the party came forward, spread out in fan-shape formation. Mack let fly with the revolver and scattered them still farther apart. Again they approached, and again the revolver spoke, adding another victim to the toll. After that there was silence.

"What will they do now?" asked Nora.

"I don't know. They may try to starve us out. One thing is certain—they cannot force an entry while I have any ammunition left."

"Is there any other outlet?"

"I wish there was."

"I think there must be, for I can feel a draught coming from the other direction."

Mack could feel it, too, but he was reluctant to

leave the entrance. Nora was quick to understand his hesitation.

"Have you any matches?" she asked.

"Yes; but I have something better still—an electric torch."

"Splendid! I will hold the entrance whilst you go and explore. You will be better at that than I. Please—please! I am used to firearms and can shoot quite well. If they should come I will fire at once, and you can come back."

Mack ultimately agreed, and gave her the revolver, whilst he wended his way through the mass of fallen rock which littered the cavern. Now and again the roof sloped down to form a tunnel, through which he had to creep on hands and knees. But always the faint breeze fell on his face. Once more he was in a high-roofed chamber, from which a number of passages diverged. Choosing the one through which the cold air came, he went forward.

Soon a steep incline was reached. It went up and up, turning in spiral fashion the while. At length he reached the top and found himself under the stars several hundred feet above the main entrance. Away to the right was a fire, around which several figures squatted. It was clear that the pursuers intended to remain. Then he uttered a low growl as the light of the fire played for an instant on the cruel features of Yellow Jack.

But Yellow Jack must wait. The pressing problem was the welfare of Nora. He dropped down the hole again, and began to retrace his footsteps. He was near the entrance when a shot rang out. He rushed forward to encounter Nora just entering the cave.

"You haven't been out——?"

He stopped as he realised that she was carrying a rifle in her left hand.

"Isn't it luck!" she breathed. "One of the Indians came close and I shot him in the arm. He dropped the rifle, so I snatched it up."

Mack examined the magazine and found it contained six cartridges.

"By jove, you've got pluck!" he exclaimed.

"It wasn't pluck—it was sheer desperation. Now we shall meet them on better terms."

"Perhaps there will be no need. I've found a new outlet."

"Oh, splendid!"

He pointed to the west, where a bank of cloud was creeping forward.

"In a quarter of an hour the moon will be obscured. That will be the time."

They waited until the brilliant light on the snow faded, and then, leaving the entrance, made through the cavern to the new outlet. Mack, upon reaching it, put the torch away, and, slinging the rifle over his

shoulder, helped Nora on to the snow. It took a few seconds to fix the snowshoes again, and then like spectres they moved away.

But the configuration of the country proved to be their enemy. A few hundred yards brought them to a sheer precipice. They moved along it only to find that it was sheer on three sides. The only means of escape lay in the direction of the fire.

"Confound!" muttered Mack. "I never bargained for this."

"We shall have to take the risk?"

"We shall."

They turned in their tracks and moved towards the fire. As luck would have it, an Indian chose that particular moment to poke it into a blaze. It shed a powerful light across the snow, throwing into relief every object. Nora saw a man suddenly leap up and point towards them. There was no escape now. Behind was the precipice, in front the enemy.

"Lie flat!" cried Mack.

But Nora, instead of lying flat, snatched the revolver from his holster and prepared to uphold her honour.

"Do as I tell you," snapped Mack.

"I'll lie flat when you do—and not before. I'll leave you the rifle."

Mack had the rifle to his shoulder the next moment, and hit the man who was preparing to annihilate

him. Thereupon the Crees forgot all about Yellow Jack's injunctions and began to fire furiously.

The light of the fire faded as the battle went on. Mack, knowing the limit of his ammunition, fired only when he was comparatively certain of his aim. In ten minutes three Crees were hors de combat. But by that time Mack had but one cartridge left. Nora was doing no execution with the revolver, but her fire had the effect of keeping the enemy off.

In the gloaming a man was approaching Nora unobserved. She saw him only when he was within a yard of her, and fired the revolver into his face. A dull click was the only response. It was a missfire. The next moment his hands were on her. Mack heard her cry. He turned and let loose the last round. The man dropped and lay still.

"Look ! Look !"

Nora's excited cry caused Mack to swing round. He saw for the first time since the fight began the figure of Yellow Jack. He had succeeded in getting behind Mack, and was now preparing to write "Finis" to Mack's career.

Mack saw the immediate danger and swung the empty rifle by the barrel. The butt-end caught Yellow Jack's revolver and sent it flying. The next moment the two men were in each other's arms.

Nora swept up the revolver, but was unable to use it, for the two combatants were mixed up in the

snow and fighting for dear life. The remaining Indians were held spellbound by the scene. Over and over rolled the two powerful men, and always nearer to the edge of the precipice.

Nora gasped as the snow broke away, leaving the fighting pair within a foot of the sheer edge. She saw Yellow Jack turn like an eel and raise his fists above Mack's face. But they never descended, for Mack, with a lightning movement, turned completely over and came uppermost. The turn put an end to the fight. For a second they hovered on the brink, and then disappeared into the abyss.

Nora uttered a sharp cry of horror as the two struggling figures disappeared over the precipice. The surviving Indians were no less astonished at the denouement, and did not seem inclined to continue the fight. Nora took advantage of their temporary bewilderment to run past them and make for the bottom of the cliff.

The moon was now clear again, and visibility was good. Long before she reached the bottom of the steep incline she could see two still figures on the snow. Her heart beat wildly as she approached them. The first she came upon was Yellow Jack. He was lying in a curious position staring up at the stars. She knelt beside him and found that he was cold already, and his neck was broken.

Mack was but six yards away, but as she ran to

him he moved and tried to sit up. She caught him as he fell back again, and her hands touched something wet and sticky. She looked at them, and saw they were red !

" Oh—oh ! " she wailed.

The head on the snow turned and the eyes opened. There was blood on the face—blood everywhere, but the eyes were bright and steady as always.

" I—I must have hit a rock," muttered Mack.

" Don't move ! "

" Oh, I'm all right."

To her amazement, he dragged himself to his knees and then stood upright.

" Where's that fellow—Yellow Jack ? "

" Dead."

He gave a low whistle and, seeing the still body, staggered across to it. Having satisfied himself that Yellow Jack was indeed no more, he began to pile snow over the body. A big protuberance in one of the pockets arrested his attention. He felt inside, and drew forth a huge bundle of banknotes.

" They're worth salving," he muttered. " It'll please Dan."

Then a fit of giddiness overtook him, and he swayed alarmingly. Nora grasped his arm, and did her best to support him.

" Better now," he muttered. " I seem to be in a dreadful state. My head——"

He took off his cap and displayed the ugly wound caused by his tremendous fall. Nora found a pocket handkerchief and wiped away the blood. Mack calmly offered her a larger one and she bound it round his forehead.

"My memory seems blunted," he said. "Did we kill all those fellows?"

"No. Two of them remained. I think they have gone and taken their wounded."

"They will bring the whole encampment back before long. We must beat it."

"Yes—yes. Which way?"

"That way. I left a sled on the trail. It contains food and other things. We may need them."

They made away from the place at the greatest speed possible. Though Mack said no word, it was obvious to Nora that his wound was causing him intense pain. It was as much as he could do to walk straight, and from time to time he stumbled and almost fell.

"You are ill," she murmured.

"Lost a little blood, that's all."

"Hadn't we better rest?"

"No. I don't want those fellows on our track again."

The weary march continued into the small hours. At last they came upon the abandoned sled, and there Mack's strength gave out. She saw him

fighting to retain control of his will, but there were limits even to his amazing constitution. He fell flat beside the sled.

It took her the better part of half an hour to get him on to the sled, but at last she succeeded, and after resting for a few minutes, she took hold of it and began to manhandle it across the desolate expanse.

When Mack opened his eyes he found himself lying on a blanket in front of a crackling fire. Behind him was a tent, and between him and the tent was Nora, engaged in pouring some hot liquid into a mug. The sun was rising in the east, and all the snow was roseate.

"Nora!" The name slipped out before he could stop it.

She almost dropped the hot coffee in her astonishment, and turned her blushing face to him.

"How did we get here?"

"On the sled—you remember we found it along the trail."

"But I know this place—we are twelve miles from where we found it."

She nodded and went on straining the coffee. When she had finished she came across to him with a mug in her hand.

"Drink this."

" Did you manhandle that sled and me all last night ? "

There was nothing else to be done. I was afraid the Indians would find us. Please drink this."

He sighed and drank some of the coffee. This girl astonished and embarrassed him. He could not look at her without realising that her beauty was the beauty of the wild rose. He was aware that whenever their eyes met there was a quickening of her bosom. He would not have liked to admit that at the same time there were queer emotions stirring in his own breast.

" Are you feeling better now ? " she asked.

" Thanks. And you rigged the tent, lighted the fire and made breakfast ? "

" Is there anything wonderful in that ? "

" Yes, there is," he retorted, " after all you have been through. Why didn't you rouse me ? "

She looked at him as a mature woman might look at a boy. It was curious that with her youth she could mingle this matronly air when she chose.

" You don't seem to realise that you are badly hurt," she murmured. " It is a marvel you are alive."

" Nonsense ! One gets used to being knocked about. But what of the Crees—is there any sign ? "

" None."

"Good. I don't think they will take up the chase again. Now tell me what happened after you left the old storehouse."

She narrated the adventure in a low, impressive voice. While she was thus engaged Mack suddenly remembered a fact that in some incomprehensible manner had been forgotten up to now. It came upon him like a blow, and with its coming was revealed an even more painful truth—she did not know that the man whom Yellow Jack had shot in his wild flight was her own father! The fact that she had not mentioned it—that she was in comparatively high spirits—was proof positive.

And while he was searching for some means to break the terrible truth to her she was approaching that part of the story. Mack felt as if some icy hand was clutching his heart. She reached the incident of the shooting, and clenched her fists as she reconstructed the scene.

"Then he laughed," she said huskily. "He shot a man and a horse and laughed! Oh, it was horrible. Thank God he has got his deserts."

So the opportunity to tell her passed. Mack, with all his fearlessness, found the duty placed upon him almost impossible to carry out. He could not bear the thought of the suffering this knowledge would cause her. For the first time in his life he found himself fudging the issue.

"You look ill," she murmured. "Are you feeling worse?"

"I'm all right," he replied huskily. "Let us start soon."

"Not to-day."

"But we——"

"To-morrow morning. You must rest awhile. I will not move until to-morrow."

It was as well, for Mack was feeling strangely faint. His head buzzed like an alarm clock and the slightest movement sent acute pains through his brain.

So they stayed over the day, and Nora dressed his wound with her soft hands and tended him as a mother might a child. It was a novel experience to Mack, but one that was extremely pleasant. But all the time his heart ached with the secret it held. And the longer he held it the worse it ached.

It was evening, and Mack was sitting near the fire with a clean new bandage round his head, torn from heaven knows where. Nora, making an original dish of her own in the small aluminium frying pan, turned to smile at him.

"I guess my father is worried to death about me. I'll be glad——"

She stopped as Mack's face became contorted with pain, and immediately put down the frying-pan and went to him.

"Is it hurting——?"

He looked intently into her eyes and, taking both her hands, forced her into a sitting position beside him.

"There's something I want to tell you, Nora. Can you bear it?"

"If—If it's something I must hear, better I should hear it now."

"It's something that is going to hurt you to the soul. I wish that it was any one's duty but mine to tell you."

The deadly seriousness of his words caused her lip to quiver, but she quickly tightened her mouth and nodded her head.

"I don't understand you, but tell me—whatever it is."

"You remember the man who followed Yellow Jack on horseback—the man who was shot?"

"Yes."

"I found him on the trail. Can't you—can't you guess who it was?"

"I only caught a glimpse of him. I——" The pool-like eyes became misty as the significance of his words dawned on her. If it was some one she knew and loved it could only be one person. Her voice came in a pitiful choke. "You don't mean it was my—my——"

She read the unuttered word in his eyes. A

shudder went through her body and the beautiful head drooped. When she raised it again a scalding hot tear fell on Mack's hand—then another.

"My—father!" The lips did no more than frame the words. Into her heart the iron was striking, and Mack felt it no less than she did herself, for this sweet-minded, courageous girl had become very dear to him.

"You are a brave little woman," he murmured. "The bravest girl in the world. You must face this new trouble as you've faced the others."

"I will—I will. But you can't think how it feels to—to be alone. We loved each other so much. Since my mother died——"

Her speech was strangled in her throat. Her fingers tightened on Mack's arm. He drew the beautiful head closer to him and let his fingers wander through the curls. She had need of sympathy just then, and Mack strove to delude himself into thinking that the queer tightness in his breast was that and nothing else. She was but eighteen, he told himself—a mere girl!

On the next day they resumed their journey, Nora pale of face and silent, and Mack also feeling the cloud that had settled on them. Then came what proved to be the most painful duty of all—the retrieving of the body of Nora's father. He saw her fighting against her emotions and winning over

them. If he had admired her before, he revered her now.

"You are great," he murmured.

"I should not be without you. You have taught me so much."

"Not so much as you have taught me."

She looked at him wonderingly.

"How could I teach you anything?" she asked.

He did not feel like explaining that eight years before a certain woman had shaken his castles to the ground and, as he had then believed, killed his faith in the sex for ever. All that seemed like a fast-fading dream that disappeared more and more into the background every time he looked at Nora.

"A man learns a lot even after he has turned thirty," he replied.

"And you have turned thirty?"

"This morning."

"So it is your birthday! I wish you many, many happy returns."

"Thank you."

"I only wish you could have had it in pleasanter circumstances."

"I have spent many a worse," he replied. "But for the fact that you are sad, I think it would be the happiest I have ever had."

"I will not be sad to-day," she said. "I will not spoil your birthday. You must not be sad because

of me. You have everything to be thankful for. All you set out to do you have achieved. ”

“ There is more in life than that kind of achievement, Nora. I’ll admit I have missed a lot.”

“ Surely not ? ”

He nodded gravely, but did not enlighten her further. More than ever he wished to keep his emotions in check, partly because the present was no time to give them full play, and partly because he imagined that the towering pinnacle of thirty years placed him outside the understanding of a girl of eighteen. So little did he understand her.

Silver Bow was made the following day. The store was being run by a half-breed in old Chilcote’s absence. When the sad news was broken it flew round the town at lightning speed. Nora found plenty of sympathisers, but she wanted no more than to be left alone.

“ I’ll have to go to Saskatoon to report,” said Mack. “ But I’ll be back in a few days.”

She nodded and took his hand, holding it so tightly that he caught his breath. He tore himself away with his brain swimming. Everything seemed different now—everything. But she was only eighteen—he could not forget that.

He decided to see Dan before he left, and, after making inquiries, learned that the injured mail-carrier was lying-up in his small shack. Dan almost

leapt out of bed when he saw him. He drank in the news with wide eyes, and chuckled when Mack gave him the stolen notes that he had taken from Yellow Jack. Then his face grew serious as he reflected on Nora's position.

"What's to become of her? She can't run the store."

"Why not?"

"Chilcote was up to his ears in debt. They'll have to sell the stock and the furniture to pay his creditors."

"Great heavens! Are you sure?"

"Yes. Chilcote used to have a fondness for poker. It ruined him."

This was grave news to Mack. What could Nora do without a penny to her name? All the way to Saskatoon his mind was engaged with the problem.

Mack received a mighty welcome at Saskatoon. Already the news had gone through, and all the men in camp turned out to shake him by the hand. Bull Hicks, still suffering from Yellow Jack's bullet, scowled when Mack explained briefly what had happened.

"Now, ain't that the gory limit? I bin lying here planning what I'd do to that feller——"

"I'm sorry, Bull, but he was too dangerous a customer to save up."

" Maybe he was. And now I guess you'll stay in camp awhile ? "

Mack shook his head. There were reasons why he should go to Silver Bow without delay, and he had already applied for a few days' leave. Bull looked miserable when he heard what was in the wind.

" What's got hold of you ? " he grumbled. " Silver Bow ain't a holiday resort."

" Far from it," replied Mack. " Cheer up ; you'll soon be on the trail again."

So Bull remained perfectly ignorant of Mack's intentions. Mack himself was not quite sure of his ground, but he hoped the thing he had in mind could be arranged.

On arriving at Silver Bow he went straight to the office of the solicitor who was handling Chilcote's affairs. The latter frowned when Mack mentioned the object of his call.

" If you've any claim you'd better file it now. The thing is in a rotten condition——"

" I've no claim," said Mack. " I want to know how the girl stands. Will there be anything left ? "

" Anything left ! Why, I'm planning for an auction to sell everything—lock, stock, and barrel. Even then there'll only be a dividend."

Mack bit his lip and came to the point.

" Does the girl know ? "

" Not yet."

"Good. Is there a will?"

"Nothing."

"Then we must make one. I don't care how you work it—but one has got to be framed."

"What on earth are you talking about?"

"It's like this. I put it to you that about a year ago Chilcote performed a certain service for me, for which I agreed to pay him five thousand dollars. I've come to pay it now."

"Eh! That's the first I've heard of that!"

"Quite likely, but there it is. But the girl has got to have it—do you get that? It's not going to be frittered away in expenses or creditors' claims."

The solicitor stroked his chin and then seized some documents lying close to him.

"I calculate that the stock and furniture will just about clear the claims and expenses. This five thousand could remain intact."

"Good. Now, I want a will."

"What for?"

"It will look more natural. I want it to include a condition—no, a wish—that Nora will go away to a finishing school down east for two years. That's just what Chilcote would have wished. If she stays here she'll never forget the past. Down there she'll make new friends and be happy again."

"But I can't fabricate a will!"

"You can. No man in the world will dispute it."

You'll do it, now you know it's for that girl's good. She'll never suspect a written document dated back——"

The solicitor nodded his head and smiled. Mack had given himself away.

"It—it might be managed," he said. "But be frank—why are you doing this?"

"Doing what? I tell you I owe Chilcote five thousand dollars—and there it is."

He handed over a thick wad of notes drawn but yesterday from the bank at Saskatoon. It represented most of the money he had possessed in the world, but he had never considered that.

"Well, I must take your word for it," said the solicitor. "I think I can manage to find the will."

"Good. And not a word about that debt of mine. See Nora to-day, and tell her what she has to do. I must be away early in the morning."

It was rather late in the evening when Mack called on Nora. He found her clad in a neat black dress, against which her face was like a white mask. Her joy at seeing him was undisguised.

"My dear friend," she murmured. "I had hoped you would come soon. How is your forehead?"

Mack had, indeed, forgotten it. Seeing Nora again aroused all the old emotions in his breast. But now it was too late to consider them. Only a few hours

before he had planned for her future, and he did not mean to go back on that decision. If she had any love for him, he persuaded himself, it was a kind of hero worship that a young girl would naturally have for a man of his own description.

"What are you going to do now, Nora?" he asked.

"That is what I wanted to see you about. Mr. Jenkins has been here. He discovered an old will of my father's, and in it my father desires me to go to a school if he should die before I am twenty. I did not know that my father managed to save any money, but he seems to have put aside a sum for me. Dear, old daddy!"

"And you will go?"

"Yes. I don't want to leave Silver Bow, but if daddy thought it best for me, I must do it. What do you think?"

"I think it would be good for you. Have you chosen a school?"

"Mr. Jenkins has—down in Ontario. He is writing to-day. I can learn things there that may be useful to me—typewriting and secretarial work."

"Yes, of course," replied Mack dreamily.

"But I shall miss Silver Bow and all the people who have been so good to me, and I shall feel so strange in a school filled with girls whom I don't know."

"You will soon get to know them, and they will love you, as every one does."

She looked at him keenly, but his face was as inscrutable as the sphinx.

"When do you go?" he asked.

"As soon as a reply comes—a week or so, I expect. Shall you be here then?"

Mack had intended to go back to Saskatoon at once, but her appeal was not to be refused. He decided to stay over and see the last of her. The days slipped away all too quickly. The reply came, and Nora heard that she could leave as soon as she liked.

"I am going to-morrow," she said. "Shall—shall I see you then?"

"I will take you to the station."

And on the morrow Mack underwent the painful ordeal of saying good-bye to the only woman that had ever melted his frozen heart in eight long years. She tried bravely to be cheerful, but at the last she broke down.

"Courage!" he whispered. "Perhaps you will write me one day and let me know how you are getting on."

"Yes—yes."

And then she did an astonishing thing. As the sleigh was moving she put out her hands, caught his head and kissed him on the cheek! Bewildered and with aching heart, he watched the sleigh disappear,

and wondered whether there might not have been an alternative less painful to both of them !

Spring was breaking over the prairie lands. On all the sunward slopes the snow had disappeared, bringing to view multitudes of buds and early flowers. Already the birds were coming back. Each day brought new swarms winging their way from the south.

After a seven months' winter nature was doing her best to make amends. The air was charged with that indescribable "something" that gets into a man's blood and sends it singing through his veins. It certainly had this effect upon the group of mounted police making their way towards Saskatoon. They laughed gaily as they set their mounts at a gallop and held an impromptu competition over a mile of beautiful flat trail.

The winner—Bull Hicks—brought his horse up on its haunches by the fir tree which served as a winning post and waved his hat.

"Come along, you walking funeral. I guess old Blunderbuss has got you all beat."

Blunderbuss was the fine black mare which he rode. It was in truth no faster than several of the other mounts, but it boasted the best rider in the corps. What Bull didn't know about horseflesh wasn't worth knowing. Sergeant Mack, who came

hot on Bull's heels, turned his horse cleverly and came abreast of his companion.

"There's water yonder, Bull!"

"Sure—a fine place for a camp."

"Good—we'll make it."

The party went forward at an easy canter, and in a quarter of an hour made the creek which Mack had pointed out. They had been in the saddle since daybreak, and possessed enormous appetites. After watering the horses and feeding them the troopers selected a sunny spot and prepared to attend to their own requirements. Mack, finding his water-bottle almost empty, went to the stream to replenish it. Bull's eyes followed him. The man next him nodded towards Mack's broad back.

"What's wrong with Mack?"

"Wrong? Nothing."

"Somehow he seems different of late. He was always mighty quiet, but he's a regular dormouse now."

Bull pursed his lips. In a way the remark was true. Mack was still the same patient, determined, good-natured man, but at times there crept into his face an expression that Bull could not understand. Bull had seen him more than once staring into nothingness as a dreamer does. And Mack had never been a dreamer.

"He's never been the same since he landed

Yellow Jack," said his companion. "Do you remember—he got a mighty bad whack on the head? It may be that."

Bull, always staunch to his friend and reading in the remark a kind of criticism, turned fiercely on the speaker.

"Say, what's your grouch? Ain't Mack still the greatest thing that ever was? When it comes to hard-plugging can you beat him?"

"Talk sense!" growled the other. "He ain't changed that way, and never will. But you'll have to admit he looks different."

"Oh, looks don't count for anything."

Another man close by joined in the conversation.

"Have you heard they're planning to give Mack promotion?"

"Promotion!" snarled Bull. "A fellow like that don't need promoting. I guess he wouldn't take it, either. Why, he's the heart and soul of this troop anyway, and if——"

He stopped as he realised that Mack was in hearing. But Mack, judging from his face, had heard nothing. He took up a position near Bull and passed a few remarks from time to time.

"We ought to make Silver Bow this evening," said Bill.

"Easily."

"Say, what happened to the pretty girl—poor old

Chilcote's daughter. She went away to school or something. Didn't she ever come back ? ”

Mack's penetrating eyes swept Bull's face as if he suspected that something lay behind the question, but Bull was quite innocent.

“ She's still away,” said Mack. “ I heard she was doing rather well.”

“ That's fine. She was bound to do well. Gee, she had a way with her ! ”

Mack inclined his head. Who better than he should know that Nora Chilcote, indeed, “ had a way with her ” ? Eighteen months had passed since he had said good-bye to her, and those eighteen months had been filled with letters passing to and fro. They were the letters of an ingenuous girl—full of unconscious sweetness. She told him about the college, her friends, her various little adventures. She had suggested coming to Silver Bow for the vacation, but when she knew that Mack was on duty a great distance away she seemed less inclined to make the journey, and went to Toronto instead to the home of a friend.

She had wanted to know about the old home at Silver Bow, about the old folks she used to know, and about himself. Mack had found it difficult to keep up the correspondence. He had not her volubility—her beautiful ingenuousness. It required great self-restraint not to give expression to the

emotions which swept him. For Mack had had eighteen months in which to arrive at a certain fact. It was that he loved her to distraction.

What puzzled and hurt him now was that she had not written for over a month. He told himself that there was no obligation to write on her part. He was nothing but a friend. They had been flung together in the course of his duty, and had parted soon after the dramatic termination of a great adventure. Why did not the passage of time dull the memories ?

The answer lay in her letters. They were so typical of herself. The written words had the effect of conjuring up her incomparable form and features. No ; she could not be forgotten while life remained.

After a brief meal the men got to saddle again, and the journey to Saskatoon was resumed. There was no great hurry, and the horses were walked for the main part. It was two hours later when a rider overtook them. One glance at him revealed the fact that he was the mail-carrier.

" Dan ! " cried Bull. " You're sure the most welcome sight. Yank over that mail o' mine."

" There's nothing for you," replied Dan. " Why, you ain't had a letter for two years."

" That's no reason why I shouldn't get one," grumbled Bull.

The other troopers had gathered round Dan, who

was hunting through the mail-bags. There were several for the party, and they slit them open there and then, eager to read any line of news from respective friends and relatives.

"Nothing for me, Dan?" queried Mack.

"There was one," replied Dan. "Darn me if I haven't lost it!"

"You're great at losing the mail," chipped Bull. "Gee, I remember when you lost the whole boiling."

Dan remembered it, too, but he did not like to be reminded of it, for he took his vocation very religiously.

"It's the only time it ever happened," he muttered. "That fellow Yellow Jack was sure the biggest bone-head that ever breathed. Gee, I'll never forget that little jag we had up in the old store. Why, Mack and me were up agin a dozen of 'em, and all the time the floor was burning under us. Oh! here it is. Sergeant Alexander Mack—that's you, I guess?"

Mack took the letter and his eyes gleamed as he recognised the writing. Bull, who was near him, recognised it, too. He didn't know whose writing it was, but he had seen many letters in the same hand.

"She ain't forgotten you, Mack," he drawled.

The remark was made in bantering tone, but Mack

appeared to resent it deeply. He glared at Bull, and, rapping out an order, set the men moving again. Dan, in his usual hurry, galloped ahead and waved his hand. Bull felt both vexed and humiliated. It was the first time Mack had treated him that way, and it hurt.

"He sure ain't himself," he muttered. "What's got him?"

But Mack had already regretted the hard look and was ashamed of it. For some reason difficult to understand he could not bear to be "chipped" where Nora was concerned, for she formed the background of his whole existence. He dallied a little and waited for Bull to get abreast.

"Bull, I'm not myself to-day. Forgive me, old man, if I appear sour."

"Sure," returned Bull. "We all get rattled at times. I did when a fellow hit me on the head with a twelve-pound weight!"

Mack postponed the reading of Nora's letter until late that evening. When most of the men were curled up in their blankets and only the running of water broke the uncanny stillness, he slit open the envelope and perused the contents.

There were apologies for not having written for over a month—excuses couched in her charming manner. Followed two sheets descriptive of her

doings during the immediate past. But it was the last part of the letter which literally took Mack's breath away.

" . . . And now for some startling news ! Last fall I invested a dollar in a Swiss lottery-ticket. Of course, I forgot every word about it until I received a letter last week. Imagine my positive amazement to learn that I am the winner of 200,000 francs ! I've been trying to work this out in dollars, and on the best authority I hear it is over 40,000. Isn't it the most wonderful thing that ever happened ?

" No, not the most wonderful. There is something else, dear counsellor and friend. Even to you I scarcely dare mention it. I am in love. I didn't know it until recently. It came in one great revelation. And there lies my trouble. The man in the case is all that is good and splendid. That he loves me I feel sure, but he will not speak. Somehow I feel he will never speak. Now that I have this money it makes me more independent. Might I not do a thing which otherwise would be appalling ? This is leap year, and they tell me that a girl may propose on this occasion. Do I shock you with this plain hint of my desire ? Perhaps he would despise me for that—but, on the other hand—— I implore you to write me—no, wire me by return, and tell me what you think I ought to do.

" You see, always I bring my troubles to you. But you are my fairy-godfather and whatever you say must be right. If you say don't do this thing I won't do it—but it will break my heart—and, perhaps, his, too, in the end——"

Mack raised his head, and the flimsy sheets of paper crackled in his fingers. Nora, in love ! He had never dreamed of this possibility, and yet how mad not to anticipate it. Could a woman like that spend a year and a half in a well-populated district and fail to be admired by a hundred different men ? It accounted for the gap between her letters.

And she was asking him to advise her ! He laughed grimly at the irony of it, and awoke Bull, who sat up and stared at him. Bull saw the sheets of paper and the look of pain.

" Any trouble, old man ? " he asked.

" No—nothing much."

But Bull wasn't to be put off in that fashion. Abandoning all discretion, he wrapped the blanket round his shoulders and came over to Mack.

" Say, Mack—we bin mighty good trail-mates these ten years, I guess ? "

" Of course, Bull."

" Wal, I calculate you got some kind of trouble. Now, ain't it one that another fellow can take a share in ? "

Mack shook his head, and put his hand on Bull's arm.

"You couldn't help, old fellow. Besides, it isn't so deadly serious as you imagine. It's just that a certain person—that I am fond of—is going to get married. That's all!"

"So that's all!" grumbled Bull. "Wal, I guess she could have done a darn sight better elsewhere."

"I doubt it. Now tumble in. Good-night!"

On the next morning Mack wired his reply from Silver Bow. He preferred to do that rather than write, for brevity was less painful. The telegram contained but five words:

"Yes, if you love him."

To say that Mack had received the greatest blow of his life is no exaggeration. He blamed himself for his folly in sending Nora away. He believed that had he dropped his scruples eighteen months ago and listened to his heart rather than his head this bitter disappointment might have been avoided.

But he was philosophical enough to realise re-pining would bring him no satisfaction. He set himself to accept the situation, and devoutly hoped that she would be happy. She had said little about the man, but he had confidence in her judgment.

"Lucky devil!" he muttered.

A few days later he and Bull had occasion to go to

Silver Bow. Bull had quite imagined that his comrade would be sunk in the deepest gloom, but to his surprise Mack was almost light-hearted, and talked a great deal about the past and the future.

"They've offered me a job at Regina—an office job, Bull. What do you think of that?"

"I reckon there are more lunatics in the world than most folk imagine," growled Bull. "An office job—well, I ask you!"

"So you don't think it will suit me?"

"It wouldn't suit me or any of the boys to know that a husky like Sergeant Mack was writing 'chits' in an office. Say, you ain't going to do that?"

"Never. There's no life like the good life of the trail. After ten years of it a man can't leave it until his bones crack."

"I guess not. Gee! that's good riding, ain't it, now?"

Bull pointed to the rapidly-moving form of a horse in the distance. Rider and horse seemed modelled in one piece—a symmetrical shape that ate up space at an amazing rate. Within half a mile of them the horse turned and made for a wooded ridge, where it halted. The rider's hand went down and caressed the horse's neck affectionately.

"Why, it's a woman!" exclaimed Bull.

Mack had already realised that. Moreover, there

was something strangely familiar about her. Bull's eagle eyes were the first to recognise her.

"Damn me, if it ain't Nora Chilcote!"

"Impossible!"

"It is."

Mack's lips twitched. There was now no further room for doubt. His heart had already whispered that astounding truth, and his eyes now corroborated it. They were making a line that would pass the still form. Mack turned to his companion.

"Ride on, Bull. I'll join you at Silver Bow."

Bull shot him a quick glance and obeyed. Mack pulled his horse round and cantered towards the waiting girl. She saw him coming, and rode to meet him.

"You, of all persons!" she ejaculated.

He took the extended hand and looked for a second into the deep, soft eyes.

"This is extraordinary."

"Not a bit. I've been dying to see what Silver Bow was looking like. I came up yesterday. I bought this horse, and have just been trying him out. Are you in a hurry?"

"Not a great hurry."

"Then come and have lunch with me. See, I've brought an enormous supply. There's a beautiful dell in the wood. I used to play there years ago, when I was a small girl."

He could not resist the temptation, and rode along by the side of her. He drew in his breath as he surveyed her. She might have been a girl eighteen months ago, but now she was a woman—no less beautiful, no less ingenuous, but a woman nevertheless.

“Do you think I have grown?” she asked.

“Yes—even more beautiful.”

“You mustn’t say that.”

“No, I suppose not,” he sighed. “You—you got my telegram?”

She nodded, and he saw the blood mount to her cheeks.

“And you have spoken?”

“Not yet. I thought that, now I was independent, it would not be difficult—and in leap year, too—but it is difficult. I was surprised at your telegram. I felt sure you would consider me the most depraved creature even to contemplate such a thing.”

“Nothing you did could be very bad,” he replied.

“If that is the only way to your happiness you must take it. But I do not understand, nevertheless.”

“Understand what?”

“Why the man does not speak.”

“If you knew him as well as I do you would understand. I think it is just because of his nervousness in this matter that I—I love him. He

doesn't understand women much, and he thinks that—at least, I think——”

Mack was not very keen to hear more about the tongue-tied lover. They halted their horses in the dell, and Nora threw down the bag of provisions. They ate and talked to the music of a babbling brook, reviving the past at every other word.

“How does a girl propose to a man?” she asked suddenly.

“Heaven knows! No girl has ever proposed to me.”

“Then one shall—for practice. Sit quite still and see how it is done.”

She laughed merrily and, creeping towards him, fell on her knees, with her hands clasped.

“Sir Galahad,” she murmured. “It is leap year, and all maidenly restraint is gone. From all I have observed and dreamed you are in love with me. Is that so? Come, tell me you love me.”

“I—oh, this is nonsense!”

“It isn't—it's a full-dress rehearsal. Won't you say you love me?”

“Very well—I love you,” said Mack huskily.

“You are sure?”

“Quite sure.”

“And I love you. That's all there is to be said. Now, you may kiss my hand.”

She held up her slim, soft hand. Mack looked at

it hungrily, and then, taking it, raised it to his lips. Then the loose grip tightened. The policeman became an outlaw !

" You drive me to madness," he muttered. " Why should I give you up to this man, who doesn't know his own mind—I who have loved you from the moment I first saw you ? "

" You love me ! " she murmured.

" Yes, Nora ; if I had told you that eighteen months ago, would you have listened—would you ? "

" I—I might."

" Oh, heavens ! And I sent you away believing——"

" You sent me away ? "

He realised the terrible blunder he had made, and strove to correct himself.

" What am I saying ? I must be crazy."

" No, it's true," she said. " You know it's true. Do you think I didn't know enough of my father's affairs to realise that some one had helped me ? "

Mack turned his head away, reproaching himself for not having kept a closer guard on his tongue.

" I soon discovered—everything."

" I'm sorry," he muttered. " I did not intend that you should ever know. I wanted to help you to forget certain sad things. You must forgive me."

" I do not think you need forgiveness. I have had time to think it out. I know now that you did

it without hope of reward, or even thanks. I was only a girl then, but I am a woman now—and I've come back to you."

"To me!"

She nodded, and in her eyes he saw a tear forming. Then the whole thing was made clear.

"You mean there is no other man?"

"There never has been. In your telegram you told me what to do, and I came up here to obey you."

Mack gasped. The hand that enfolded Nora's drew her closer towards him. He saw behind the welling tear the dawning happiness, and with a great sigh kissed her passionately.

"I'm the happiest man that ever lived."

"And I the happiest woman. You see, I did propose after all."

"Now it's my turn," he retorted. "I'll illustrate some things you omitted."

THE END

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FOR fifty years the county of Clearwater had been at feud with the United States Government, refusing to discharge a debt of half a million dollars which it had contracted at the representation of a certain promoter who had promised them a railway now known as The Ghost Road, of which only an embankment remained. Under this heavy burden the county had gone to seed. Justice was corrupt, and lawlessness was rife. When Thomas Calvert, heir of the bondholders who had purchased the bonds in good faith from the original sharpers, arrived in Clearwater, he was met by suspicion and hostility. How Calvert successfully overcame the opposition is vividly described in George W. Ogden's excellent novel.

RALPH PAGE

FLAME

OF FORGOTTEN GUNS

AILEEN SPENCER of the Circle Eight had taken on a man's job. Since the death of her father she had made a brave attempt to run the ranch herself. One day a stranger turned up at the ranch. Pat Slade, a young townsman, had been advised by his doctor to get out West and live an open-air life for the sake of his health. Aileen offered him a job as a hired hand, and Pat promptly accepted, partly because he liked her blue eyes and partly because he had been warned that there was trouble in them thar hills. And trouble there was, for Pat found himself in the thick of blazing gun-battle that made him feel the West could be distinctly unhealthy. *Flame of Forgotten Guns* is an exciting story and the characters are well portrayed and likeable.

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Round Up Sanders!

CHARLES WESLEY SANDERS

Author of *Killer's Code*, *Blotted Brands*, etc.

CROOKED TRAILS

CROOKED TRAILS is a highly exciting mystery story set in a small town in the Arizona cattle country. Old Daniel Lord, a retired rancher, is found dead in mysterious circumstances. His daughter Alice rushes to the house of Dr. Moreland to seek assistance and the doctor and his son Bill set out to investigate. Bill Moreland discovers important evidence which leaves no doubt that the old rancher had been murdered. He eagerly follows the trail. It is a trail, however, which has many unexpected twists. Full of excitement and thrills, the story grips the reader from start to finish.

CLEM YORE

Author of *Ranger Bill*, *The Two-Gun Kid*, etc.

HARD-RIDING SLIM MAGEE

ANY job looked good to Slim Magee when he joined up with Jim Oakley's outfit. How did he know that they were a particularly clever gang of bank-robbers and cattle-rustlers, bad men whom any sheriff's posse would shoot on sight! He found out a little too late, however, for he was already tied up with this gang who were to lead him to the brink of shame and quick death before he finally escaped from their clutches. Clem Yore certainly knows how to describe the mad, pulsating life of the Wild West.

